

1807/1786. X

THE
GREAT IMPORTANCE
OF A
RELIGIOUS LIFE
CONSIDERED:

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,
SOME MORNING AND EVENING
PRAYERS.

The THIRTIETH EDITION, Corrected.

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1797.



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ADVERTISEMENT.

THE honourable and very ingenious Compiler of A Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors in England, having ascribed the following excellen^t Treatise to JOHN PERCEVAL Earl of Egmont; I think it incumbent upon me to declare, in justice to the revered memory of my honoured Father, that The Great Importance of a Religious Life, was written by the late WILLIAM MELMOTH, of Lincoln's-Inn, Esq. and first published early in the beginning of the present century.

W. M.

*Bath, May, 16,
1790.*



A SHORT
C H A R A C T E R
OF THE
A U T H O R

Of the following

T R E A T I S E.

IT may add Weight, perhaps, to the Reflections contained in the following Pages, to inform the Reader that the Author's Life was one uniform Exemplar of those Precepts, which, with so benevolent a Zeal and so pathetic a Simplicity of Style, he endeavours to recommend to general Practice. He left others to contend for Modes of Faith, and inflame themselves and the World with endless Controversy : it was the wiser Purpose of his more ennobled Aim, to act up to those clear Rules of Conduct which Revelation hath graciously prescribed. He possessed by Temper every moral Virtue ; by Religion every Christian Grace. He had a Humanity that melted at every Distress ; a

Charity which not only thought no Evil, but suspected none: and he exercised his Profession with a Skill and Integrity, which nothing could equal but the disinterested Motive that animated his Labours, or the amiable Modesty which accompanied all his Virtues. He employed his Industry, not to gratify his own Desires; no Man indulged himself less: not to accumulate useless Wealth; no Man more disdained so unworthy a Pursuit: it was for the decent Advancement of his Family, for the generous Assistance of his Friends, for the ready Relief of the Indigent. How often did he exert his distinguished Abilities, yet refuse the Reward of them, in Defence of the *Widow, the Fatherless, and of him that had none to help him!* In a word, few have ever passed a more useful, not one a more blameless Life; and his whole Time was employed either in doing Good, or in meditating it. He died on the 6th Day of *April* 1743, in the 76th Year of his Age, and lies buried under the Cloister of *Lincoln's-Inn* Chapel.

MEM. PAT. OPT. MER.

F. D.

THE

T H E

P R E F A C E.

THE Design of the following Treatise is,
to awaken in the Minds of unthinking
Men, a serious Sense of Religion and a true
Concern for the Interest of their immortal
Souls: a Design, at all Times seasonable
and necessary, but more especially at this
Time, when we see such Numbers of Per-
sons carried away with the immoderate
Love of Pleasure, and such Arts invented
to gratify their corrupt and vicious incli-
nations.

Whoever reflects, with a due Concern,
upon the Excesses and Debaucheries which
have overspread this Nation, and has any
Regard for the Honour of God, and the
Interest of that Holy Religion which Christ
Jesus came down from Heaven to establish
upon the Earth; will easily be convinced,
that all Endeavours possible ought to be
used, to stem the Torrent of Wickedness
which is broken-in upon us, and to pre-
vent

vent the mischievous Effects of those public Diversions, which the Generality of People are grown so fond of; I mean the Masquerades and Plays. In those Seminaries of Vice and Irreligion, every Thing is contrived to inflame the Passions and corrupt the tender Minds of young Persons; and I am persuaded, they have greatly contributed to that general Neglect of God and Religion, which is so visible among us.

Whether any Thing that is here offered, will be effectual to draw Men off from the pursuit of those deceitful Vanities, I cannot say; but sure I am (if the Scripture is to be the Rule of our Practice, as most undoubtedly it is), it must be the Duty of every one, not only to take care that he give no Encouragement by his Example, to these licentious and ensnaring Entertainments, but also to do what in him lies, to dissuade others, especially those under his Care, from resorting to Places of so much Danger and Infection.

P R E F A C E.

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It must be confessed, that it is no easy Matter to prevail on those who are carried away by the false Maxims and Practice of a corrupt and deluded World, to renounce their sensual Gratifications, for the more refined Pleasures of Virtue and Religion; but the difficulty of the Work should not discourage the attempt. I have therefore attempted, according to my Ability, to lay before the Reader the Advantages attending a good Life; in Hope, that whoever seriously considers what is urged in the following Pages, will be convinced there is no Pleasure to be compared with that of a good Conscience; and that Religion really is, what it was designed by the great Author of it to be, the only solid Foundation of our present, as well as future, Happiness.

I am sensible that what I shall offer hath been inculcated with much greater Advantage in many of those excellent Discourses which are already extant; yet, when I consider how much Good hath been
done

done by those small Tracts which have been printed and dispersed of late Years, I am encouraged to hope that this little Treatise may prove of some Service; as a check at least, to that insatiable Thirst of sensual Pleasures, which seems to be the Disease of the present Age, and which must undoubtedly destroy the Love of God wherever it prevails.

I have added some Prayers at the End of this Book, not with an Intention to prescribe to any one, but to assist those who are not furnished with better Helps; well knowing how important a Duty Prayer is, and how highly necessary it is for every good Christian to be frequent in his Addresses to the Throne of Grace, if ever he expects the Favour of God, and hopes to find GRACE to help him in Time of Need.

May God of his great Goodness give a Blessing to these weak Endeavours, and render them instrumental to His Glory, and the Good of Souls!



THE

GREAT IMPORTANCE

OF A

RELIGIOUS LIFE.

CHAP. I.

WHAT must I do to be saved? was a

Question, which the trembling and astonished Jailer put to *Paul* and *Silas*, when he saw the Prison-Doors opened in a miraculous Manner: a Question of the utmost Moment and Importance, and which it nearly concerns us all to be well resolved. For, if there be a Life after the present, and we do not die like the *Beasts that perish*; if Death does not put a final Period to our Existence; but when this short Life is ended, we enter upon the Regions of Eternity, and shall be for ever happy or miserable, according as we demean

our-

The Great Importance

ourselves in this short Time of Trial and Probation—If this be the State and Condition of Mankind (as the Voice of Reason, the Dictates of Conscience, and the Holy Scriptures, do loudly proclaim it is), how does it behove every one of us to inquire, what we must do to attain everlasting Life; and to consider, whether we are in the Way that leads to Heaven and Immortality? or, if we have been so unhappy to wander out of it, how we may recover and return to it again?

This is an Inquiry that deserves our utmost Diligence and attention. For, if we are ignorant of the Will of God, or, knowing it, will not follow or be led by that unerring Light, but suffer ourselves to be hurried away by our unruly Passions in the Pursuit of the Things of this Life; we are wretched and miserable, blind and naked, notwithstanding all our attainments: and we shall one Day be convinced to our Sorrow, that there is no Folly like that of preferring Things temporal to Things eternal. *Whatever the Children of this*
World



World may think, and how much soever they may applaud their own Wisdom in contriving Schemes to be Rich and Great; yet if their chief Care and Concern is about these things, it is certain they will be found *Fools*, when weighed in the Balance of true Wisdom.

He that is truly wise will consider, that he has a Soul as well as a Body to take care of; a Spiritual and immortal Substance which can never die; but when enlarged from that Prison in which it is now confined, must live for ever, either in Happiness or Misery. Shall we then be so foolish, as to confine our ambitious Pursuits within the narrow Limits of this World, without considering what will be the condition of our Souls hereafter? Shall we labour and toil for *the Meat that perisheth*; and be cold and indifferent about the momentous Concerns of Eternity? Shall we spare no Pains in order to increase our temporal Estates, and to lay up *Goods for many Years*; when we know not, but *this Night our souls may be required of us*? And if we have made no provision

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for

for their everlasting Welfare; what will it avail us that we have been Rich and Great in this World?

The Fashion of this World passeth away and all the Glory and Splendour of it will, in a little Time, have an End. How great then is the Folly of that man, and how deplorable will his Condition be, who, instead of *seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness in the first place*, has consumed his Days in seeking after the Honours and Riches of this World, and has worn himself out in the Pursuit of those Things which are of no value in the Sight of

Mat. xvi. 26. God? Wretched Stupidity! *What shall it profit a Man, if he shall gain the whole World and lose his own Soul?* Time bears no Proportion to Eternity. The most exquisite Pleasures of this Life, which at best are but of a short Continuance, can never compensate for the Loss of that Happiness, which God has prepared for them that love him. How miserably then will that man be deceived, who places all his Hopes and Happiness in the poor and empty Satisfaction of a sensual Life; who looks no farther than the present Time,

Time, and lives as if he cared not what became of him hereafter, provided he may but enjoy *the Pleasures of Sin for a Season!*

But some, perhaps, may ask, Where is the Man so abandoned to Folly and Madness, as to be content, for the Sake of a present short-lived Happiness, to be miserable for ever hereafter? I wish indeed there were none such: But, alas! there are too many that make this sad Choice. Not that any one chooses Evil for the sake of Evil, or prefers Misery before Happiness (for a Desire of Happiness is inseparable from our Nature); but in the Scripture account of Things, he is said to *choose* Destruction, who walks in the broad Way that leads to it. For God has been pleased to *set before us Life and Death, Blessing and* ^{Deut.xxx.} *Curſing*: Rewards on the one Hand, to en-^{19.} courage our Obedience; and Punishments on the other, to deter us from Sin. As the man therefore, who obeys the Commandments of God, chooses *Life*; so he that deliberately transgresses them, chooses *Death*: that Death which God has threatened to the Sinner, even Death eternal. For the *Wages of Sin is Death*, and he that chooses the one (let

his Pretences be what they may) must be said to choose the other; because he knows (at least it is his own Fault, if he
 Rom. ii. does not know) that *God will render to every*
 6, 7, 8, 9. *Man according to his Deeds: To them, who, by patient Continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality; eternal Life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth evil.*

See, then, what wretched Folly the Sinner is guilty of, (how wise soever he may think himself, and how much soever he may despise the sober Part of Mankind), when he first enters upon a Life of Wickedness! For he is then evidencing to all the World, that, *Life and Death* being set before him, he has determined his choice to the latter:—A Choice so absurd and unaccountable, that, did not Experience convince us it is often made, we could hardly think it possible for a rational Creature to be so blind. O *Blessed God! hast thou set before us Happiness and Misery; Joys unspeakable and full*

of Glory on the one Hand, and Torments endless and intolerable on the other! hast thou given us the Light of Reason to guide us, and superadded that of thy Holy Spirit to illuminate and instruct us; hast thou implanted in our Nature a Dread of, and Aversion from, Pain and Misery, and an insatiable and never-ceasing Thirst after Happiness; and is it possible for us, after all this, to be so blind and senseless, such Enemies to our own Souls, and so regardless of their eternal Welfare, as to prefer the dark Ways of Sin and Misery before those blessed Paths that lead to the bright Regions of Bliss and Glory!—Alas! such wretched Fools are too many among us, who, notwithstanding all that thou hast done for us, will not hearken, nor be advised, but run headlong into the Ways of Sin and Destruction.

This indeed is a melancholy Consideration: and what shall we say to awaken Men out of this fatal Lethargy, and to inspire them with a just Sense of their Danger? what! but intreat them to consider, that, unless they repent, they will certainly perish? For the Wrath of God is revealed against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of

Acts xvii. 30, 31. *Men:—and though God winked at the Times of Ignorance; yet now he commandeth all Men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a Day, in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead. In that awful day,*

Rev. vi. 10, 17. *Sinners will in vain call to the Mountains and Rocks to fall on them, and to hide them from the Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb.—For, when the great Day of his Wrath is come, who shall then be able to stand? —Who, indeed, shall be able to stand before the Face of an incensed God, and hear him pronounce that dreadful Sentence, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels?—Ah! who can bear an Eternity of Horror and Despair? Who can dwell with implacable Fiends in everlasting Burnings?*

Is. xxxiii. 14. *These are Considerations of infinite Concern, and sufficiently shew us the great Necessity of denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and living righteously*

These are Considerations of infinite Concern, and sufficiently shew us the great Necessity of denying Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and living righteously

teously, soberly and godlily, in this present World. But because the weightiest Truths, when their Consequences are not immediately felt, are too apt to be disregarded; I shall enlarge a little upon the great Importance of a religious Life, by endeavouring to prove these *three* Things :

I. That there is no solid Happiness to be attained in this Life, but in the Practice of Religion.

II. That as Religion is the only Thing that can make us happy while we live, so there is nothing but a good Life can give us any comfortable Prospect, when we come to die.

III. That a conscientious Observance of the Duties of Religion will not only make us live happily and die comfortably; but, what is infinitely beyond all this, will most certainly be rewarded with eternal Happiness in the Life to come.

First, then, I shall endeavour to prove, That there is no solid Happiness to be attained in this Life but in the Practice of Religion.

It has ever been the great Artifice of the Devil, to possess the Minds of unthinking Men with an Opinion that Religion is a sour, morose, ill-natured principle; an Enemy to whatever is pleasant and chearful; and that whoever engages in the Practice of it, must renounce all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this Life. But as the *Devil is the Father of Lies*, it is no Wonder that he sets every Thing before us in a false and deceitful Light: It was by these Means he deceived our first unhappy Parents; and it is by the same Methods he endeavours to betray their too credulous Posterity. He is continually representing *Evil as Good, and Good as Evil; putting Darknefs for Light, and Light for Darknefs*. He knows that there is such a Beauty and Comeliness in Religion, as no one can behold it but with Love and Admiration: and therefore he endeavours to draw a Veil over its Lustre, and to raise in our Minds frightful Ideas concerning it. And too many, alas! are misled by such false and unjust Representations.

But

But would Men be persuaded once to make the Experiment; would they forsake the dangerous Paths of Sin, and walk in the Way that leads to everlasting Happiness; would they retire from the Noise and Tumult of a loose and disordered Life, and listen to the still Voice of Reason and Religion; they would quickly find how grossly they have been cheated, and wonder how it was possible they should so long have been deceived. They would soon discover, and then admire, *the Beauty of Holiness*, and be thoroughly convinced that there is no Pleasure like that of a good Conscience; no real and solid Happiness but what results from a Life of Virtue and Holiness. They would then bless the happy Change they had made, and would not part with their Interest in Heaven for the greatest Enjoyments this World could give them. All those empty Pleasures which once captivated and ensnared them; would then appear mean and contemptible; and nothing would be thought of any real Value, but what sets them forward in the Way of Salvation.

O happy Man ! (whosoever Thou beest) that hast made this noble Trial, and by a true and sincere Repentance art restored to the Favour and Love of God ! Thou hast *turned away thine Eyes from beholding Vanity*, and canst now look up with Confidence to God, and relish the Pleasures of a virtuous Life. How is thy Mind filled with Love and Joy and Admiration, when Thou considerest, that by the Grace and Goodness of God, Thou art rescued out of the Jaws of the devouring Lion, and art delivered from Fear and Shame and Self-condemnation : the sure and miserable Attendants of a guilty Conscience !

We may have some Idea of the Happiness of such a Man, by considering what is the Pleasure of a redeemed Captive when restored to his Country, his Liberty, and his Friends ; or of a Mariner got safe to Shore after a Storm, wherein he was every Moment in Expectation of being swallowed up by the Deep. And yet it must be owned, the Comparison falls infinitely short : For, what Slavery is so great as that of a Soul under the Bondage and Dominion of Sin ? Or, what are the most terrible Dangers of
the

the Sea, when compared with those to which the Sinner is continually exposed?

But have not some, it may be asked, made Trial of Religion, and yet have found no Satisfaction therein; as may be concluded from their returning again to their former Course of Life? It is true, there are some Instances (and sad ones they are, God knows) of persons who *after they have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly Gift, and been made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, have yet fallen away, and entered again into a Life of Sin and Debauchery.* But has this been owing to a Dislike of Religion? By no means; but rather to a want of Care in not avoiding the Company which has formerly seduced them; or to a Forgetfulness, or at least a Neglect, of the Vows and Resolutions they have made; or, it may be, they have fallen under some violent Temptation, which they have not so vigorously resisted as they might and ought to have done. Instances, however, of this kind, I trust, are but rare. Whereas, on the other hand, how many are there, who having forsaken the

Company and Conversation of the Wicked, and, having lamented the Folly and Madness of their past Lives; have, from being the Slaves of Sin and Satan, become the Servants of God? These will tell you from their own Experience, that they have found more true Peace and Satisfaction in conquering one vicious Habit, than they ever met with in the most sensual Enjoyment; that all their past sinful Pleasures yield them now no other Fruits, than those bitter ones of Shame and Remorse: and that in Religion, on the contrary, they find such a Spring of Comfort continually refreshing their Souls, as they would not part with for all this World can possibly give them; that they taste such a Pleasure in the Service of God, as makes them, with holy *David*, desire to dwell in the House of the Lord all the Days of their Lives, to behold the fair Beauty of the Lord, and to visit his Temple; and, like him, esteem it better to be a Door-keeper in the House of the Lord, one of the meanest of God's Servants, than to dwell in the Tents of Ungodliness, amid the Delights and Pleasures of a wicked and deluded World.

Psalms
xxvii. 4.

In fact,

In fact, nothing can give a Man so exquisite a Satisfaction, as to reflect upon the Actions of a well-spent Life; to consider that he has made God his Friend, and secured an Interest in the Favour of Him who is the eternal Source and Fountain of all Good; infinite in Mercy and Loving-kindness, as well as in Power; not only able, but willing and ready, to help and assist him in all Difficulties: a Being to whom he may have Recourse under every Trial and Temptation; under the greatest Calamities and Troubles of Life; to whom he may lay open all his Wants and Infirmities; pour forth all his Sorrows and Afflictions, and may at all Times with Confidence look up, as being assured that he has a powerful Intercessor in Heaven, *Jesus* Col. i. 14. *Christ the Righteous, in whom we have Redemption through his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins; and who is able to save* Heb. vii. *them to the uttermost that come unto God by* 25. *him, seeing he ever liveth to make Intercession for them.* I say, for a Man to consider these important Truths; to think that he is answering the End of his Creation; that he is doing

doing the Work for which he was sent into the World; that he is become a *Member of Christ, a Child of God, and an Inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven*—How must such Thoughts cheer and refresh his soul with a solid, substantial, and lasting pleasure! in Comparison whereof all the vain and empty Enjoyments of this World are as nothing.

Psalms
xxxiv.
16.

But then, on the contrary, for a wicked Man to reflect, that *the Face of the Lord is against them that do Evil*, and consequently that he is in the Number of those against whom God has declared his displeasure; that, instead of *working out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, he is daily *heaping up to himself Wrath against the Day of Wrath*; and though (it may be) he is now *cloathed with Purple and fine Linen, and fares sumptuously every Day*; though he may at present live in all the Gaiety and Splendour, the Pomp and Luxury, of a great Fortune, yet there will come a Time (and, for aught he knows, it may not be many Moments off) when he shall be stript of all his Pleasures and Enjoyments, and want even a Drop of Water to cool his Tongue:—
Surely,

Surely, such Considerations as these must strike the Sinner with Horror and Amazement; and, like *Belshazzar* when he saw the *Hand-writing upon the Wall*, make him tremble, even in the midst of his greatest Mirth and Jollity.

Can a Man with such Impressions on his Mind (and these, or something like these, will be sure to haunt the Sinner) be said to be happy? Are the Stings of Conscience, the Terrors of an Almighty Judge, and the dreadful Expectations of God's Vengeance, consistent with a state of Satisfaction?—Alas! the Libertine may flatter himself, and think to deceive others, by putting on an Air of Gaiety and Pleasantness; but, it is certain, his Mind can never be long at rest, while he carries about him a faithful Monitor, that will be continually upbraiding him for his Folly and Madness; representing to him the Dangers to which he is exposed, and crossing him, as it were, in his Way, while he is in full Pursuit of his unlawful Pleasures.—And though he may perhaps be able sometimes to silence the voice
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of this troublesome Companion, by mere dint of Noise and Extravagance; yet when his Passions abate (for they cannot always be upon the Stretch) and the Man grows cool, he will find the Upbraidings of his Conscience return upon him with the greater Violence. The Shame and Anguish, the Horror and Confusion, that he will then feel, will infinitely overbalance all the Satisfaction he can meet with in the Enjoyment of his sinful Pleasures.

I own, indeed, this is not the Case of every Sinner. A Man, by a long Course of Wickedness, may arrive at such an hardened State, as to be incapable of any virtuous Impressions; his Soul may be seared, as it were, with an hot Iron, and be fallen into such a deep and fatal Lethargy, as nothing perhaps shall be able to awaken it, till it comes to feel the very Torments of the Damned. But no one, I believe, will think this to be a State of Happiness.

The Truth is, if we consider a wicked Man with respect to this world only, abstractedly from what will be his Portion hereafter, we shall find that there are many
and

and great Evils to which he is exposed, beside the Torments of a guilty Conscience. Are not Pains and Aches, Rottenness and Diseases, the natural Effects of Lust and Intemperance? Poverty and broken Fortunes, the certain consequence of Pride and Prodigality? Does not Passion, and Anger, and Revenge, frequently expose Men to mischievous, and, many times, fatal Quarrels and Contentions? Does not Robbery, Theft, and Murder, bring upon others a shameful and untimely End? How many Evils are there in the World, that are the immediate Effects of Men's Vices! *From whence comes Wars* Jam. iv. 1. *and Fightings among you?* says St. James; *come they not hence, even of your Lusts that war in your Members?* And from the same fatal Source are derived many of those other Evils and Calamities which some Men labour under. If we trace them to their Original, we shall find them to be the natural Fruits of Lusts and Passions; to have proceeded from covetous and ambitious Desires, and the Gratification of unruly Appetites. Indeed, how can it be otherwise, if we consider, *That the Curse of the Lord is in* Prov. iii.

the^{33.}

Prov. xiii. *the House of the Wicked; and that Evil*
 21. *pursueth Sinners?* How can any Thing but
 Misery attend *Him*, who has provoked the
 anger of an Almighty God?

Let us now consider, what is the Lot
 and Portion of good Men in this World;
 and whether the Practice of Virtue and
 Righteousness is not the most likely way
 to promote present as well as future
 Happiness, and to make our Pilgrimage
 here on Earth a State of tolerable Ease
 and Comfort.

Solomon had as much Experience of the
 Pleasures of the World as ever Man had,
 and tried as many Ways to make him-
 self happy as his Heart could devise;
 Ecclef. ii. *having kept nothing from his Eyes that they*
 10. *desired, nor with-held his Heart from any*
Joy; and yet, when he came to cast up
the Account, he found this to be the Sum
of it, that all was Vanity and Vexation of
Spirit. Accordingly, when he is instruct-
 ing his Son in the Ways of true Happi-
 ness, he advises him to get *Wisdom and*
 Prov. iii. *Understanding.* For, *Wisdom*, says he, *is the*
 13. *principal Thing: therefore get Wisdom; and*
with all thy getting, get Understanding. And,

is an Encouragement to do so, he tells
 him, that *happy is the Man that findeth* Prov. iii.
Wisdom, and the Man that getteth Under-^{13, &c.}
standing: For, the Merchandize of it is better
than the Merchandize of Silver, and the
Gain thereof than fine Gold. She is more
precious than Rubies, and all the Things thou
wouldest desire are not to be compared unto her.
Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in
her left Hand Riches and Honour. Her
Ways are Ways of Pleasantness, and all her
Paths are Peace. This Wisdom and Un-
 derstanding, which he recommends, as a
 Treasure of so great Value, is not the
 Wisdom of this World (for that is Foolish-
 ness with God, 1 Cor. iii. 19.); but it is
 the Wisdom that cometh from above, which
 will make us wise unto Salvation: the
 Wisdom of living in the Fear and Love
 of God, and in a strict Obedience to his
 Commandments. *The Fear of the Lord* Prov. ix.
says he, is the Beginning of Wisdom, and^{10.}
the Knowledge of the Holy is Understanding:
 Or, as it is in Job, *Behold the Fear of the* Job xxxiii.
Lord, That is Wisdom; and to depart from^{28.}
Evil is Understanding.

Behold

Behold then the Excellency of Religion! it not only secures to us a Reversion of endless Happiness, but makes our Lives at present easy and delightful: the very Paths of Religion are pleasant, as well as the End to which they lead. It is true, Vice has its present Pleasures as well as Virtue: but then there is this Difference between them; the Pleasures of Sin are weak, short-lived, and only varnished over; they begin and end almost in the same Moment, and can never be purchased but at the Expence of much succeeding Trouble, Shame, and Self-condemnation. Whereas those which result from a holy and religious Life, are substantial, sincere, steady and secure: they leave no Disgust upon the Mind; no Loathings and Dislike; are neither accompanied with Shame, nor followed with Remorse or Sadness: those bitter Allays to all sinful Gratifications.

“ We may talk of Pleasures and Enjoyments, says a * *Great Prelate* of our Church, but no man ever truly found them, till he became acquainted with God, and was made sensible of his

* *Arch. of York, in his Volume of Sermons, p. 501.*

“ Love, and Partaker of his Heavenly
 “ Favours, and lived in an entire Friend-
 “ ship and Communion with him.” No,
 certainly; Religion is the only Happi-
 ness of a rational Creature, the only Thing
 that can give us any true and real Satis-
 faction: all other Pleasures are, at best,
 but short and transitory; but in Religion
 we find a Delight and Satisfaction, which
 is solid, substantial, and lasting; a Delight
 that grows and improves under Thought
 and Reflection.

“ Whenever (*to use the Words of an-*
other excellent Person) “ an Action is good
 “ and virtuous, it is not only natural, but
 “ carries with it a Felicity flowing from,
 “ and essential to, the very Nature of it.
 “ Paternal, conjugal, filial Affection; are
 “ they not full of Delight? Justice, Friend-
 “ ship, Beneficence, all the Offices of Hu-
 “ manity, and the whole Train of Virtues;
 “ does not the Exercise of them administer
 “ the most sincere and lasting Joy? The
 “ Propensity there is in us toward them,
 “ and the Satisfaction there is in the
 “ doing of them, does, in Dispositions
 “ not

“ not debauched, lead most irresistibly
 “ to the practice of them : We have, when
 “ we are about them, no boding, misgiving
 “ Thoughts, no forbidding Whispers,
 “ no secret Reluctancy. Comfort, Com-
 “ placency of Mind, and a gratulating
 “ Conscience, always accompany such Ac-
 “ tions.”

What a perpetual Source of Joy and
 Consolation is a good Conscience ! It glad-
 dens the Heart, cheers and refreshes the
 Soul, and fills the Mind with a con-
 stant Serenity and Chearfulness, which is
 infinitely to be preferred to the noisy
 Mirth of Fools and Madmen. He that
 is possessed of this inestimable Jewel, has
 a Treasure greater than all the Riches of
 the *Indies* : a Treasure, which he always
 carries about with him, and which nei-
 ther the Malice of the Devil, nor the
 Wickedness of Men, can rob him of.
 And so long as he retains this Fund of
 Joy and Comfort, (as he always may,
 unless he is wretchedly wanting to him-
 self), he can never be truly miserable. For
 a good Conscience, as it gives a Relish to all

our

our outward Enjoyments, so it abates and takes off the Edge of the sharpest Affliction; and not only enables a Man to bear up under present Evils, but fortifies him against the Dread and Apprehension of future ones. It arms him with Courage and Resolution, and gives him such a Firmness and Presence of Mind, as makes him able to endure the greatest Shock. Solomon observes, that *the Wicked* Prov. flee, *when no Man pursueth; but the Righteous* xxviii. 1. *are bold as a Lion.* And the Holy Psalmist tells us, that a good Man *shall* Ps. cxii. 7. *not be afraid of any evil Tidings; for his Heart standeth fast, and believeth in the Lord.* The Lord, says he, is my Light Psalm and my Salvation; *whom then shall I fear?* xxvii. 1. *The Lord is the Strength of my Life; of whom shall I be afraid? Yea, though I* Ps. xxiii. *walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for thou art with me, thy Rod and thy Staff comfort me.* What indeed should He fear, whose Soul is anchored upon the Rock of Ages; *who has the God of Jacob for his Help;* Ps. cxlvi. *whose Hope is in the Lord his God? He*⁵ knows

knows that he is in the Hands of a most gracious and merciful Father, and is fully persuaded that *all Things shall work together for good to them that love him*: He is assured, that *the Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope in his Mercy to deliver their Soul from Death, and to keep them alive in Famine.* And therefore he can rejoice in God, even in the midst of Trouble and Affliction, when he considers, that as his Afflictions come from the Hands of a good and gracious Being, who *does not willingly afflict the Children of Men*; so he knows that *as the Time is short*, they can be of no long Continuance, and that, if he makes a right Use of them, *they will work for him a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.*

See then the Folly and Madness of those that take not God for their Strength, but trust to the Multitude of their Riches, and strengthen themselves in their Wickedness, and think by these Means to be fortified against the Evils of this Life!—Alas! There are numberless Calamities from

from which Wealth and Power can never shelter us: and therefore if a Man withdraws his Trust in God, and takes Sanctuary in the Strength of his Wickedness, he will find himself miserably mistaken when the Day of Adversity comes upon him. The Weight of Sin superadded to that of temporal Evils, is a Burthen heavier than any Person is able to bear. It is certain, whatever the Great of this World may think, nothing can alleviate the pressure of Worldly Troubles but a good Life. It is *That*, and *That* only, which is a sufficient Counterpoise to balance the Weight of any severe Affliction: nothing else is sufficient to support a Man in *the Evil Days of his Pilgrimage*, and to sustain his Spirit under the most oppressive Calamities of this Life. All other Experiments, how promising soever, will be found vain and ineffectual. The Consciousness of having in some Measure lived holily and unblameably, will make him look up with humble Assurance to the great Supporter of his Being; enable him to see through the darkest Clouds of Sorrow,

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and

and behold with an Eye of Faith that heavenly Country to which he is travelling, and where he hopes shortly to arrive. And this, though it will not wholly remove the Afflictions which God is sometimes pleased, for wise and good Ends, to send upon some Men in this Life, nor make us insensible of the Pangs that attend them; yet it will greatly lessen and enervate their force, and enable us to bear up under them with Courage and even Chearfulness. For, how strong a Consolation must it be for a good Man, under bodily Pains, or Grief of Mind, to contemplate a State where there shall be *no more Sorrow no more Pain, and where all Tears shall be wiped for ever from his Eyes!* Or, if he is under the Pressure of Want and extreme Necessity, how must it support and relieve his sinking Spirits to consider, that he

Heb. xiii. 5. has a father in Heaven *who will never leave him nor forsake him*, how much soever he may at present think fit to deprive him of outward Comforts! and that there is no Person in the World so great, so prosperous, or so happy, but that (having a little Patience) he himself shall be more so!

The Sum of what I have said upon this Head is so elegantly expressed by the Author of a late Essay upon the Omnipresence of God, that, I am persuaded, I shall leave this Reflection more strongly upon my Reader's Mind, if I give the Words of that unknown, but excellent, Person: 'How happy' (says he, speaking of the intercourse there is between God and the souls of good Men), 'how happy is an intellectual Being, who, by Prayer and Meditation, by Virtue and good Works, opens this Communication between God and his own Soul! Though the whole Creation should frown upon him, and all Nature look black about him, he has his Light and Support within him, that are able to cheer his Mind, and bear him up in the midst of all those Horrors which encompass him. He knows that his Helper is at hand, and is always nearer to him than any thing else can be which is capable of annoying or terrifying him. In the midst of Calumny or Contempt, he attends to that Being, who whispers better Things within his Soul, and whom he looks

' upon as his Defender, his Glory, and *th*
 ' *Lifter-up of his Head.* In his deepest
 ' Solitude and Retirement he knows, that
 ' he is in Company with the greatest of
 ' Beings; and perceives within himself such
 ' real Sensations of his Presence, as are
 ' more delightful than any thing that can
 ' be met with in the Conversation of his
 ' *Creatures.* Even in the Hour of Death
 ' he considers the Pains of his Dissolution
 ' to be nothing else but the breaking-down
 ' of that Partition, which stands between his
 ' Soul and the Sight of that Being, who
 ' always present with him, and is about
 ' to manifest itself to him in Fulness of
 ' Joy.

' If we would be thus happy, (to go
 on with the Words of this pious Author
 ' and thus sensible of our Maker's Presence,
 ' fence, from the secret Effects of his
 ' Mercy and Goodness; we must keep
 ' such a Watch over all our Thoughts
 ' that, in the Language of the Scripture
 ' *his Soul may have Pleasure in us;*
 ' must take care not to grieve his Holy
 ' Spirit, but endeavour to make the most
 ' ditati

meditations of our Hearts always acceptable in his Sight, that he may delight thus to reside and dwell in us. The Light of Nature could direct *Seneca* to this Doctrine, in a very remarkable Passage among his Epistles; *sacer inest in nobis Spiritus, bonorum malorumque Custos & Observator; & quemadmodum nos illum tractamus, ita & ille nos.* There is a Holy Spirit residing in us, who watches and observes both good and evil Men, and will treat us after the same Manner that we treat him. But I shall conclude' (says the same Author) 'this Discourse with those more emphatical Words in Divine Revelation; *If any Man love me, he will keep my Word, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our Abode with him.*'

I have thus far considered the Effects of a good Life, *First*, as it fills our Minds with Joy, Peace and Comfort, and delivers us from those uneasy Reflections which haunt and torment the Sinner: and, *Secondly*, as it is a Means to secure us from those Evils, which are the immediate consequences of Sin; and supports

us under such Afflictions as it sometimes pleases God to send upon good Men in this World. I shall now consider it with respect to some other Advantages it hath above that of a wicked Course of Actions: and I trust it will fully appear, that there is nothing so likely to secure a Man's Happiness in this World, as a strict Observance of the Precepts and Duties of Religion.

St. Peter lays it down as an undoubted Truth, that whosoever desires to live happily, must live holily. *He that will love Life,* 1 Pet. iii. 10, 11. *says he, and see good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from Evil, and his Lips that they speak no Guile; let him eschew Evil, and do Good. And the Reason that temporal Prosperity is so likely to be the Lot and Portion of the Religious Man is, because the Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers; but the Face of the Lord is against them that do Evil.* It is very evident from the whole Tenour of the Scriptures, that the Providence of God watches over and Supports good Men in this World. *O taste and see,* says the holy Psalmist,

Psalmist, how gracious the Lord is! Blessed ^{Pf. xxxiv.}
is the Man that trusteth in him. O fear ye ^{8, 9, 10.}
the Lord, ye that are his Saints: for, they
that fear him lack nothing. The Lions do
lack, and suffer Hunger; but they who seek
the Lord shall want no manner of thing that
is good. How remarkable are the Words of
the wise Son of Sirach to the same Purpose!
Look at the Generations of old, says he, did ^{Eccles. ii.}
ever any trust in the Lord, and was con- ^{10.}
founded? or did any abide in his Fear, and
was forsaken? or whom did he ever despise
that called upon him? Add to this that
Observation of Holy David; I have been ^{Pf. xxxvii.}
young, and now am old; yet saw I never ^{25.}
the Righteous forsaken, nor his Seed begging
their Bread. On the contrary, I have ^{Ver. 35.}
seen, says he, the Ungodly in great Power, ^{36.}
and flourishing like a green Bay-tree: I went
by, and, lo! he was gone; I sought him,
but his Place could no where be found. The
Contemplation of this watchful Providence
of God over good Men made the devout
Psalmist resolve and say, I will always give ^{Pf. xxxiv.}
Thanks unto the Lord; his Praise shall ever ^{1.}
be in my mouth.

It is certain, that God is a Being of infinite Purity and Holiness: and as he must therefore hate Iniquity with the utmost abhorrence; so there is no doubt, but a serious and conscientious Observance of the Duties of Religion will recommend a Man to his Favour and Protection. He that *feeds the Fowls of the Air, clothes the Grass of the Field,* and is of a Nature so diffusively bountiful, *as to make his Sun to rise on the Evil, as well as on the Good, and sends his Rain both on the Just and Unjust;* will undoubtedly in a more peculiar manner bless the Labours of an honest and industrious man, and provide for those that fear him and keep his commandments. I would not be understood to say, that never any wicked Man hath prospered, nor any good Man been unsuccessful in this World: it frequently pleases God, for wise and good Ends, to suffer the Righteous to fall into great Perplexities and Distresses. However, since

Pf. v. 12. *the Scriptures assure us, that the Lord will bless the Righteous, and compass him*

Pf. cxii. 3. *with Favour as with a Shield; that Wealth and Riches shall be in the House of him that feareth*

feareth the Lord, and delighteth in his Com- Pf. cxii. 1.
mandments; that Blessings shall be upon his Prov. x. 6.
Head; that the House of the Righteous shall xii. 7.
stand, and the Tabernacle of the Upright shall xiv. 11.
flourish; that it shall be well with them Ecclef.
that fear God: and in short, that Godliness viii. 12.
hath the Promise of the Life that now 1 Tim. iv.
is, as well as of that which is to come; 8.

we may certainly conclude, that a strict Observance of the Duties of the Christian Religion, is the most likely Way a Man can take to thrive and prosper in the World, and to make his Life comfortable and happy.

Of this Truth we may be convinced, not only from the Testimony of Scripture, but from the Reason and Nature of Things. For, let any one consider whether he who is just and true in all his Dealings, honest and sincere in all his Professions, and faithful to his Word and Promises; who is diligent and industrious in his Calling; who makes it his constant Rule to do to all men as he would they should do to him; and is so far from endeavouring to over-reach and defraud his Neighbour, that

he chooses rather to forego the greatest Gain, than purchase it at the Expence of the least Injustice—I say, it is impossible for any person to reflect and not acknowledge, it is much more probable, that such a man should enlarge his Fortune in the World, than he who acts the very reverse; that practises all the Arts of Cheating and Lying, of Over-reaching and Circumvention, and stoops to every Thing, how base and dishonest soever, which he thinks will turn to his present Profit; that considers not so much how honest and upright his Actions are, as how profitable; and cares not what his Neighbour suffers by his Injustice, if he himself does but get by it. Such a man when he comes to be known (as he will not be able long to conceal himself), will certainly lose his Credit and Reputation; he will become hated and despised, and every person will be afraid to have any Dealings with him. On the other hand, the honest and upright Man (beside the Blessing of God, which he cannot fail of) will be sure to meet with the Love and Esteem of all that know him:

he

he will have few, if any, Enemies ; but will have many Friends, and those some of the wisest and best of Men, who will be always ready to assist him, and glad of every Opportunity of promoting his Interest and Happiness.

2. Another great Blessing of Life, and which gives a Relish to all other Enjoyments, is *Health*. And who is more likely to obtain this Blessing than the Religious Man ? for will not Temperance, Sobriety, and Virtue (Duties which he constantly practises) conduce more to a sound and vigorous Constitution of Body, than Surfeiting and Drunkenness, Lust and Intemperance: the mischievous Effects of which are too visible to be denied ? *Who hath Woe ?* (said Solomon) *who hath Sorrow ? who hath Contentions ? who hath Babling ? who hath Wounds without Cause ? who hath Redness of Eyes ? They that tarry long at the Wine, they that go to seek mixed Wine.* What Pains and Diseases have some Men brought upon themselves, merely by their Excesses and Debaucheries ! Diseases, which have not terminated with their own Lives, but have been entailed upon their

their unhappy Posterity! And how can it be otherwise, unless it should please God to change the Nature of Things? for, if Men will run into those Excesses which inflame and corrupt their Blood; it is no Wonder that Gout or Dropsy, or some more immediately fatal Distemper, should proceed from such Disorders. And when a vicious or debauched Parent has brought Rottenness into his own Bones; though the Children may be free from the Vices of their Father, yet they frequently feel all their Lives the mischievous Effects of his Transgressions.

3. Again: *a cheerful and contented Mind* is another great Blessing of Life; for, without it, nothing in this World can make us happy. And by what means shall a Man obtain this, but by the Practice of Religion? *That* will teach him to resign his Will to God, to submit to all the Dispensations of his Providence, and to be patient and easy, cheerful and satisfied, under every Disappointment and Trouble he may meet with; as knowing that God is the sovereign Disposer of all Things; a Being of infinite Goodness, Kindness, and Love; that

that He does not willingly afflict the Children of Men, but makes every Thing work together for good to them that love him. And how quiet, easy, and contented, must such a Man be under all Events! He has learned, with St. Paul, how to abound, and how to want; and as he is not puffed up with the one, so neither is he cast down, when it pleases God to send the other; but goes through the World with a calm, even, and contented Mind, undisturbed by that Inquietude, Impatience, and Discontent, from which a proud, envious, and ambitious Man is seldom, if ever, free.

4. *Peace* is another great Blessing; highly conducive to the Happiness of Life: and to this the religious Man has the justest Claim. He considers, that, *if* John iv. God so loved us, as to send his Son to be the ^{10, 11.} Propitiation for our Sins, we ought also to love one another; and therefore he is an Enemy to no Man, but kind and good-natured and obliging to all; and, if any person is so unreasonable as to reward him Evil for Good, (as the Psalmist complains some had done to himself) yet, in Imitation of his Blessed Saviour, whose Example
he

- he continually sets before him, he does
- Matt. v. 44. *Good to them that hate him, and prays for them that despitefully use him, and persecute him.*
- 1 Pet. ii. 23. *When he is reviled, he reviles not again; when he suffers, he threatens not, but committeth himself to him that judgeth righteously. He resolves, as St. Paul advises, to put away all Bitterness, and Wrath and Anger, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, with all Malice; and endeavours to attain that Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of Mercy and good Fruits. This Principle of Love, and Charity, and Good will to Mankind, as it renders the Mind quiet and easy, calm and composed; so it makes a Man not only happy in himself, but a Blessing and Comfort to all about him; and consequently attracts the Love, Esteem, and Admiration, of all those that see and feel the kind and benign Influences of so divine a Temper.*
- Pf. cxix. 165. *Great Peace, says the Psalmist, have they which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them. And the Prophet assures us,*
- If. xxxii. 17. *That the Work of Righteousness shall be Peace;*

Peace; and the Effects of Righteousness,
 Quietness and Assurance for ever.

But now, on the other hand, the Life
 of an angry and revengeful Man is all
 Storm and Tempest: he is like a *II. lvii.*
turbulent Sea when it cannot rest, whose^{20.}
Waters cast up Mire and Dirt. He is a
 stranger to Peace, and all the blessed
 Fruits and Effects of it; for, where *En-James iii.*
Wrangling and Strife is, there is Confusion and^{16.}
every evil Work. His Mind is continually
 restless, and uneasy, agitated to and fro
 with the violent Force of unruly Passions,
 which lead him on from one Evil to an-
 other, and frequently hurry him into those
 that are of a very mischievous Con-
 sequence. What Misery and Torment must
 a Man feel, who is possessed with a
 Spirit so directly contrary to that of the
 Gospel! how little can he taste of the
 true happiness of Life, whose Mind is
 always discordant and out of Tune! He
 may perhaps *possess* a great deal of the good
 Things of this World, but can have very lit-
 tle Enjoyment: for, what Comfort can He
 find from any Thing, who has no Peace
 in his own Mind; who is at Enmity with
 I himself,

himself, and with almost every one else, and is capable of being put out of Humour by every trifling, cross Accident? Is it possible for a Man of such a Temper to be happy, even in the midst of the greatest Prosperity? No, certainly: it is the meek spirited, that our Saviour hath pronounced *Blessed: They shall inherit the Earth, and be refreshed*, as the *Psalmist* speaks, *in the Multitude of Peace*, and shall find a real Comfort in whatever they possess; which, though it should happen to be but little, yet, being enjoyed in Peace and Quiet, and with a contented Mind, will undoubtedly yield them a much greater and truer Satisfaction, than a Man of a contrary Disposition can reap from large Possessions and ample Revenues.

Matt. v.
5.

5. I shall mention but one Advantage more which a good Man has above a wicked one as to this World; and that is, in respect of *dutiful and obedient Children*: which is allowed by all to be a great Blessing in itself, and is what the former has much more Reason to expect and hope for, than the latter. For

If it pleases God to bless a good Man with Children, he begins very early to instil into their tender Minds the Principles of Virtue and Religion; he teaches them to *remember their Creator in the Days of their Youth*; and brings them up in the Fear and Admonition of the Lord. He sets before them, in his own Conduct, the Example of a holy and religious Life; and endeavours to wean them from the Pride and Vanity of the World, and from those hurtful Lusts and Passions, which tend only to make them miserable both here and hereafter. He instructs them in that Knowledge which is useful and profitable, which will give them a right Understanding of themselves and of their Duty, and make them wise unto Salvation. When the Grace of God co-operates with these Endeavours; (as it will not fail to do), what comfortable Hopes may not such a Parent entertain of reaping the happy Fruits of all his Labours! Instead of looking upon his Children with Grief and Trouble, and having his grey Hairs, by their Means, brought down with Sorrow to the Grave; how much rather may

may he expect to behold them with Pleasure and Delight, when he sees them as so many *Olive-branches round about his Table*, fruitful in every good Work, and increasing in the Knowledge and Love of God?

There is no Person, I believe, but will allow, that this is the most likely Way a Man can take to be happy in his Children. And though it should not prove effectual, (for, Success is not in our own Power); yet of this he may be assured, that his pious and sincere Endeavours to train up his Children in a sober, honest, and religious Course of Life, will certainly recommend him to the Favour and Love of God; as is manifest from the great Regard God expressed for *Abraham* on this very Account. *And the*
 Gen. xviii. 17, 18, 19. *Lord said, shall I hide from Abraham that Thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty Nation, and all the Nations of the Earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his Children and his Household after him, and they shall keep the Way of the Lord, to do Justice and Judgment:*

ment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

This is a great Encouragement to Parents, to be very careful in the Education of their Children: they are making Provision for their own Happiness, at the same Time that they are endeavouring to secure that of their Children. But, should they be disappointed in these their pious Endeavours, they are laying up in store a good Foundation of Comfort, to themselves at least, against the Day of Trouble; I mean, if it should please God, that they should live to see their Children wicked and miserable, notwithstanding all the Means they shall have used to make them otherwise: for they will then have the Consolation to reflect that they are clear from the Guilt of their Children's Sins; and will be free from those bitter self-reproaches that a wicked Man must make, who sees his Children ruined by those Vices and Follies, which his Example hath taught them, or his Carelessness and Neglect suffered them to fall into. Bitter reproaches, I say, those must undoubtedly

doubtedly be, which such a Parent will make to himself, when he considers, that he has his Children's Sins, as well as his own, to account for; and applies to himself (as he justly may) those dreadful Words which God spake to the Prophet Ezekiel:

Ezek. iii.
18.

When I say unto the Wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not Warning, nor speakest to warn the Wicked from his wicked Way, to save his Life; the same wicked Man shall die in his Iniquity; but his Blood will I require at thy Hands. O terrible Words of most just Judgment! How dreadful must they sound in the Ears of a wicked Parent, whose Children have perished through his Fault!

I have now considered some of those Duties to which Religion obliges us; and endeavoured to shew how conducive they are to our temporal Happiness: by which, I hope, it sufficiently appears, how much good men have the Advantage of the Wicked even as to this World. And here I cannot but take Notice of the wonderful Love of God to Mankind, who, in order to encourage our Obedience to his Laws, has annexed a present

sent, as well as future, Reward to a good Life; and has so interwoven our Duty and Happiness together, that, while we are discharging our Obligations to the one, we are, at the same Time, making the best Provision for the other.

How much then do they derogate from the Honour of God, who represent Religion as an unprofitable and unpleasant Task! when it is plain to any man, that considers Things rightly, and is not under the Prejudice of his Lusts and Passions, that the great Design of Religion is to make us happy here, as well as hereafter. Accordingly, all its Rules and Precepts are so admirably suited to this End, that, would Men be persuaded to live in the Practice of them, we should find this World a kind of Heaven upon Earth.

But, had the Practice of our Duty been ever so irksome and uneasy, and had nothing but Trouble and Misery been the Lot of good Men in this World; yet, when we consider, that this Life will shortly have an End, and that there is an *eternal Weight of Glory* reserved in Heaven for those that truly love and serve God; what wise Man would

would not prefer the rugged Paths of Virtue and Religion, which he knows will shortly lead him into an Eternity of Bliss and Happiness, to the Ways of Sin and Wickedness, (how pleasant soever he might find them) where he is in Danger every Moment of falling into the Pit of Destruction, and which, he is sure, will, in a little Time, bring him into a Place of endless Misery and Torment?

But, since there is nothing in Religion but what tends to make our Lives easy, chearful, and contented; nothing but what is suitable to our Natures, and agreeable to the Dictates of right Reason; nothing but what will ennoble our Minds, enlarge our Understandings, and inspire us with a generous Principle of universal Love, and Charity, and Good-will, to Mankind; in short, since *the Commands of God are not grievous, but his Yoke is easy, and his burthen light*; it manifestly follows, that, as a good Life is the highest Wisdom, so a wicked one is the Extreme of Folly and Madness.

A PRAYER.

A P R A Y E R.

O MOST gracious God! who, out of thy great Love and tender Regard for Mankind, hast set before us Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing; and hast endued us with a Freedom of Will, and Liberty to choose the one, and avoid the other; and, to encourage us to make a right Choice, hast annexed a present as well as future Reward to our Obedience to thy Laws, and made the Ways of Religion Ways of Pleasantness, and all its Paths to be Peace; O give me Wisdom and Understanding, that I may not be carried away by the deceitful pleasures of this World; but may see, and know, and choose, the Things which make for my Peace, and wherein my true and only Happiness doth consist.

Convince me more and more, that Sin is the greatest of all Evils; that Guilt and Misery are always inseparable; and that there

there is no other solid and substantial Happiness to be attained in this Life, but that which results from the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the Hopes of thy Favour and Acceptance. Grant that these momentous Truths may be so deeply impressed upon my Mind, that I may make it the sincere Endeavour of my whole Life to please and obey Thee, who art my sovereign Good and Happiness; the only sure Foundation of all my Hopes both here and hereafter; and in Comparison of whose Favour all the Honours, Riches, and Enjoyments of this World, are as nothing.

Deliver me, I beseech Thee, from the Shame and Anguish, the Horror and Confusion of a guilty Conscience; and give me that Comfort and Complacency of Mind which arises from the Consciousness of having been faithful in thy Service, and obedient to thy Will. And, since thou hast been graciously pleased to make thy Service the most perfect Freedom, and the Practice of our Duty so conducive to our present as well as future Well-being; O make me steadfast and immoveable in the Ways of thy
Law

laws, and in the Works of thy Commandments; that, having faithfully served Thee in this Life, I may at last be found meet to be a Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, through the sole Merits and Intercession of our Eternal Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ. Amen!

T H E
G R E A T I M P O R T A N C E
O F A
R E L I G I O U S L I F E.

C H A P. II.

IN the foregoing Chapter I have endeavoured to shew, that Religion is the only solid Foundation of Happiness in this World; the only Thing that can make us pass the Time of our Pilgrimage here on Earth with any tolerable Ease and Satisfaction. I shall now proceed in the next Place, to consider the great Advantage of a good Life, from the comfortable Prospect it gives us when we come to die.

This

This is an advantage peculiar to Virtue and Religion; and to which a Life of Sin and Wickedness never pretended. The most which the latter promises its Votaries, is to regale their Senses for a little while: it gives them no Hopes beyond the Grave; nor aims at any Thing farther than a short-lived Happiness. *When a wicked* Prov. xi.
Man dieth, his Expectation shall perish. 7.
For what is the Hope of the Hypocrite, Job. xxviii.
though he hath gained all that this World 8.
 can give him, *when God taketh away his Soul?* All his Enjoyments are then at an End; and those Schemes, upon which he had built his Happiness, will vanish and come to nothing. But with a good Man it is far otherwise: He looks beyond this present Life, and beholds with an Eye of Faith the heavenly *Jerusalem*, the *City of the living God*; that Place of endless Happiness, which God has prepared for them that love him. In the Hopes and Expectations of this Happiness, he considers himself *as a Pilgrim and Stranger upon Earth*; and is daily endeavouring, through the Assistance of God's Holy Spirit, by a Life of Virtue and

Righteousness, to become meet to be self-
Partaker of the Inheritance of the Saints
in Light.

It must indeed be owned, that Death is
the great King of Terrors; that the Dissolu-
tion of Soul and Body, and the Thought
of becoming a Prey to the devouring
Worms, carries in it something very shock-
ing to Human Nature; yet to a good Man
Death appears in a quite different View.
He considers, that to leave this World is
only to quit a Place of Trouble and Vexa-
tion, of Vanity and Emptiness: it is to
leave a barren and dry Wilderiness, where
no Water is, for the delightful Region
of felicity, where are Rivers of Plea-
sure and a never-ceasing Spring of end-
less Comfort, which will satisfy the most
longing Desires of the Soul. He consid-
ers, that *though this earthly Tabernacle be*
dissolved, yet he has a Building of God,
House not made with Hands, eternal in the
Heavens; and is assured with Job, that his
Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand
the latter Day upon the Earth; and that
though his Body be destroyed, yet in his Flesh
he shall see God, whom he shall see for him-
self

Job xix.
25, 26, 27.

elf, and his Eyes shall behold, and not
mother's.

This is what Religion promises to them,
who, by patient Continuance in well-doing,
seek for Glory and Honour, and Immortality.
It is the Hopes and Expectations of this
unspeakable Happiness that fortify the
Mind of a good Christian, and give him
Courage and Resolution, which even
Death itself shall not be able to shake.

It was this that gave holy David such
Firmness of Mind as made him say,
Though I walk through the Valley of the Ps. xxiii.
Shadow of Death, I will fear no Evil; for
thou art with me; thy Rod and thy Staff
comfort me. He had made God his Por-
tion, his Hope, and his Trust: *The Lord*, —xviii. 1.
says he, is my stony Rock, and my Defence,
my Saviour, my God, and my Might, in
whom I will trust, my Buckler, the Horn
also of my Salvation. And though we
find him sometimes complaining, *that the*
Sorrows of Death had compassed him, and
the Over-flowings of Ungodliness made him
afraid; that the Pains of Hell came about
him, and the Snares of Death overtook him;

Psalm

xxvii.

15. yet the great Confidence he had in the Goodness and Love of God, and the firm Belief of a better Life after the present, overcame all his Fears. *I had fainted, says he, but that I verily believe to see the Goodness of the Lord in the Land of the Living.*

Religion has been the Support of good Men in all Ages. It is certain, whoever leans upon any Thing else will find that he trusts to a broken Reed, which will bend under him. There is nothing (as I have observed in the former Chapter) but the Testimony of a good Conscience, and the Hopes of the Favour and Love of God, that is able to bear a Man up under the Weight and Pressure of any great Calamity; much less will any Thing else be a sufficient support at the Hour of Death. We shall *Then* be stript of all the Pleasures and Enjoyments of this World; of all those Things in which we are now apt to place so great a Confidence: and, unless we are fortified *with the Shield of Faith, and the Breast-plate of Righteousness*; unless we have *put on the Lord Jesus*, and are cloathed with the Robes of his Righteousness;

ousness; we shall be left naked and defenceless, to encounter Death with all its Terrors. The Sinner, how much soever he may now *trust in the Multitude of his Riches, and strengthen himself in his Wickedness*, must then give up all his Dependencies, and descend into the Regions of Darkness, not only without Hope, but (what is yet more terrible) with dreadful Expectations. Of what infinite Moment then is it to all of us so to live, that *when the Time appointed for our great Change shall come*, we may meet Death without Fear and horror; and, with an humble Confidence, look up to God, in an assured Hope of his Mercy in Christ Jesus!

A good Life is indeed the sure Pledge of a happy Death. As it fills our Minds with Joy and Satisfaction while we live, far surpassing all the Pleasures of sensual Gratifications; so, when we come to die, it gives us that *Peace of God which passeth all Understanding*. When a Man in his last Hour can look back upon a Life well spent, and can say, with King Hezekiah, *Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in Truth* Isaiah xxxviii. 3.

and with a perfect Heart, and have done that which is good in thy Sight; what an unspeakable Satisfaction must it be to him! how mild and calm will Death Then appear! and with how little Concern will he receive its Summons! with what Cheerfulness will he Then take leave of this World, and all that was dear to him in it! And how contentedly will he quit his earthly Tabernacle when he considers, that he is to exchange it for a Building of God, a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens! I say, what an unspeakable Comfort must it be to a dying Man when he is entering into the Valley of the Shadow of Death, to have before him a bright Prospect of Life and Glory; to find the Light of God's Countenance shining upon his Mind, and the Comforts of his Holy Spirit cheering and refreshing his Soul; to be able to look up to God with a filial Confidence, and, with a Hope full of Glory and Immortality, to resign his Soul into the Hands of his Maker; not doubting, but his Heavenly Father, whom he has faithfully served in this World, will take Care of him, and reward him in the next;

and

and that the same infinite Power and Goodness, which has carried him safe through this *Vale of Tears and Misery*, will conduct him in his Passage to a blessed Eternity! Oh, how far more happy must the Death of such an one be, than the most envied State of the greatest Mortal! Who would not wish *to die the Death of the Righteous, and that his last End may be like His!* Especially,

If we consider, in the next place, the miserable Condition of a wicked Man, when Death approaches. But how shall I describe the Agonies and Convulsions of Mind, which a despairing Sinner labours under in his last Hour! Who can express the Anguish and Torment that *He* feels, who is under the Terrour of Death and Damnation! *The Spirit of a Man*, says Prov. *Solomon*, *will sustain his Infirmary; but a* xviii. 14. *wounded Spirit who can bear?* The most exquisite Pains and Torments of the Body are nothing, compared with what a dying Sinner feels from the Stings of his guilty Conscience. With what Shame and Confusion does he *Then* look back upon the Actions of

his past Life! How does he tremble and stand confounded, at the Remembrance of those Sins which were once the darling Objects of his guilty Desires! and what an horrible Dread overwhelms his Mind, when he considers that he is entering upon that unchangeable State, from which he knows there is no Redemption! that he is going to give an Account of a Life, which he cannot reflect upon without self-condemnation and Remorse, and for which he is justly afraid he shall in a few Moments, be consigned to endless Misery and Torments! How does he blame himself, when his Conscience reproaches him for having spent that Time insignificantly, or wickedly, which was given him for noble and excellent Purposes; that he has neglected the great and Important Work of his Salvation, and been deaf to all the Calls and Invitations of God's Holy Spirit; that, instead of laying up in Store a good Foundation of Hope and Comfort against the Day of Trouble, which is now come upon him; he has heaped up to himself a dreadful Load of Guilt, which is ready to sink him with its intolerable Weight!

© wretched

O wretched Man! what would'st thou give, were it in thy Power, to recall those precious moments which thou hast lavished away in Sin and Vanity! How dost thou wish, that thou *hadst known* in Time *the Things that belong to thy Peace!* But, alas! *They are now hidden from thine Eyes;* and nothing is left but Darkness and Despair.

But let us suppose the Life of a dying Person not to have been so flagrant and vicious, as to fill his Mind with such black and despairing Thoughts; yet, if, upon the Review of it in his last Hour, he finds in it such a Mixture of Good and Evil, that he is in great Doubt and Uncertainty concerning his eternal Welfare; how sad and disconsolate must his Condition even *Then* be! and what a dreadful Anxiety will he labour under when he considers, that he is leaving this World and going he knows not whither; that he is just launching out into the boundless Ocean of Eternity; and that the next Moment he may sink into the terrible Abyss of endless Misery and Torment! It is, without all Question, a most distress-

ful circumstance to be doubtful concerning an event, of which it so nearly concerns us to have some highly probable Assurance.

O that Men would be persuaded seriously to think on these Things! that they would *be wise, and consider their latter* Deut. xxxii. 29. *End!* and, as the *Psalmist* advises, would Ps. xxxvii. 38. *keep Innocency, and take heed to the Thing that is right! for, that, and that only, shall bring a Man Peace at the last.* And who is there so stupid, that would not wish for such an invaluable Blessing? What wise Man would not rather submit to the worst that could befall him here in a *short* Life, than run the least Risque of going out of this World under the Terroures of a guilty Conscience? It is, (whatever those, who are carried away by their Lusts and Passions, may think, it is) the utmost Wisdom of Man to prepare for his latter End, by conducting himself according to the Will of his great Creator: for, it is certain, (however some may vainly flatter themselves), there is no leaving this World with any tolerable Composure, unless our Lives have been such, as, through the

the tender Mercies of God and the Merits of Christ Jesus, to give us a reasonable hope that we may be found in the Number of those whom our great Judge shall at the last Day pronounce *Blessed*. But this can only be the Lot and Portion of the Righteous; for, how can any one, whose Life has been a direct Contradiction to the Will of God, entertain Hopes of his Favour? Perhaps, when he sees Death approaching, he may bewail the Folly of his past conduct, and *with strong Crying and Tears* resolve upon a new Course of Life, if it should please God to spare him: But, since the Gospel hath no where assured us, that God will accept of a Death-bed Repentance, or be reconciled to a Sinner who (after having lived a wicked and careless Life, and been deaf to all the Calls and Invitations of the Holy Spirit, the Threatenings of the Gospel, and the Checks of his own Conscience) shall at the last, when he is able to gratify his Lusts no longer, and begins to fear the sad Consequences of his Sins, cry out for Mercy, and wish that he had been wise in Time—I say, since God has
no

no where revealed, that he will accept of any repentance which is not followed by a thorough Change and Amendment of Life, and a sincere Obedience to his Commandments: and since it is impossible for a dying Sinner to bring forth such fruits of Repentance; how precarious must *his* Hopes be, that are built upon so uncertain a Foundation!

It is true, to repent is all that a Man who has led a wicked Life can do, when he comes to die; and it would be well, for his own Sake, and for the sake of his sorrowful Friends and Relations, that he would do *this* much, and not go out of the World hardened and insensible: for, who knows how far infinite Mercy may be extended? But, surely, it must be the greatest Instance of Folly and Madness, to hazard a Matter of such infinite Moment upon so uncertain an Issue; upon a few broken, confused, and almost despairing Sighs and Groans: for, if the Remorse and Horrors, the solemn Vows and Resolutions of such Men should not prove a true godly Sorrow; *a Repentance to Salvation*
not.

not to be repented of (as no Man can say they certainly will), they are lost and undone to all Eternity.

But suppose we could be assured, that a Death-bed Repentance would be effectual; yet who can tell, whether a Man may have Time for that Work in the Hour of Death? Or, if he could be certain that a lingering Sickness would put an End to his Days; yet how does he know that God will then vouchsafe him the Grace of Repentance? and without *That* Grace it is impossible he should repent. O how much rather may such a Person have Cause to fear, lest God should be so provoked, by his many wilful Refusals to hearken to the Calls and Admonitions of the Holy Spirit, as to cut short his Day of Grace, and deliver him over to a hardened and reprobate Mind!

The Scripture assures us, that there is a Time when Men shall call upon God, and he will not hearken. *Because I have called,* Prov. i.
and ye refused; I have stretch'd out my 24. &c.
Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have
set at nought all my Counsel, and would
none of my Reproof; I also will laugh at
your

your Calamity : I will mock when your Fear cometh ; when your Fear cometh as Desolation ; and your Destruction cometh as a Whirlwind ; when Distress and Anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they will seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated Knowledge, and did not chuse the Fear of the Lord : they would none of my Counsel. They despised all my Reproof ; therefore shall they eat of the Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with their own Devices. The End of the

Rom. ii. *to lead Men to Repentance : but if, instead*
 4. *of producing that blessed Effect, it only hardens them in their Sins, and makes them resolve to go on in their wicked Courses, vainly presuming they shall repent, when they come to die ; how just may it be in God to leave them at their last Hour under all the Terrors and Agonies of a fearful Death ! to laugh at their Calamity, and to mock when their Fear cometh !*

O consider this, all ye that forget God, lest he pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. Consider it in due Time, before

fore it be too late, before the dreadful Hour comes upon you, when all Opportunities of reconciling yourselves to your offended God shall be taken from you, and the Door of hope shall be for ever shut. Silence the Clamour of your passions, and listen to the Threatenings of God's Holy Word, the Admonitions of his Blessed Spirit, and the Checks of your own Consciences. Be persuaded to set about the great Work of your Salvation *To-day, while it is called To-day, before the Night cometh when no Man can work.* Remember, that though you are now, perhaps, in Health and Strength; in the Prime and Vigour of your Years; surrounded with the Pleasures of a great and splendid Fortune; yet the Time is coming, and (whether you think of it or not) is hastening on apace, when you must take your Leave of all that is desirable upon Earth. Nothing will *then* stand you in any Stead but a good Conscience; neither Honours, nor Riches, nor any Thing else that Men are now so fond of, will *then* be able to give you one Moment's Ease, or afford you one comfortable Thought.

Thought. Nothing will *then* be sufficient but the Consciousness of having in some Measure answered the End for which God sent you into the World ; by having lived in the Fear and Love of God, *and in Simplicity and godly Sincerity having had your Conversation in this World.*

*2 Tim. iv.
7, 8.*

It was this that made St. Paul desire *to be dissolved and to be with Christ:* for, he had fought a good Fight and kept the Faith. And therefore he could say with great Assurance, when *The Time of his Departure was at Hand, that there was laid up for him a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, should give him at that Day.* And it was this that made a late pious * Divine of our Church, when he was near his Death, utter these remarkable Expressions : ‘ I am entering upon
‘ my last Labour ; the Lord gave, and he
‘ is now taking away, blessed be the Name
‘ of the Lord ! for, I thank my God I am
‘ going without any Distrust, without the
‘ least Mis-giving, to a Place of Rest, and

* Kettlewell. *See the Preface to his Five Discourses published since his Death.*

‘ Joy,

Joy, and everlasting Bliss. There is no
 Life like a happy Death. I have en-
 deavoured, even from my Youth, to ap-
 prove myself a faithful Servant to my
 great Master. I have taken some Pains
 in writing several Books; I have seri-
 ously considered them; and am fully satis-
 fied (looking on those about him), that
 you may find in them the Way to
 Heaven. The Christian Duties con-
 tained therein have been my Practice, as
 well as Study: and now I find the Ad-
 vantage of it. And therefore be careful
 to read them often and seriously; and live
 suitably thereunto, that, when you come
 to the Condition I am now in, you may
 die with Comfort, as you see me do. I
 have some little Pain indeed; but my
 Pain is nothing so extraordinary as my
 Hopes; for, I have earnestly repented of
 all my Sins, and verily believe, that,
 through the tender Mercies of my God,
 and the Merits of my Blessed Saviour
Jesus Christ, I shall be carried up into
Abraham's Bosom. After which, it is
 said, he made this short Prayer. I wait,
 O God,

‘ O God, for that Everlasting Rest, which
 ‘ I want at present, but shall not long. I
 ‘ I am ready, when thou my God callest for
 ‘ me ; yet can stay with Patience till thou
 ‘ pleasest : for thy Time is the best Time,
 ‘ and thy Pleasure the best Pleasure.’

See here the End of a good Man ! How calm, how serene and comfortable is his Death ! Is there any Thing like *This*, in the Case of a wicked Man, in the Hour of his Dissolution ? Alas ! no. If you behold such a Person in his last Extremity (unless he die hardened and impenitent), you will hear little else but bitter Reflections, sad Bemoanings, wretched upbraidings of himself, for the Folly and Madnels of his past Life, together with despairing Sighs and Groans, black and dreadful to himself, and very terrible to all about him. May God of his infinite Mercy keep every one of us from such a dreadful Hour ! *and teach us all so to number our Days, as to apply our Hearts unto Wisdom; unto that true Wisdom, which will make us wise unto Salvation; fill our Minds with Comfort and Satisfaction, while we live; and, what is of infinitely*

initely more Value, give us, when we come to die, *that Peace of God which passeth all Understanding*, through *Jesus Christ* our Lord. Amen!

A P R A Y E R.

O Most great and mighty God! in whose Hands are the Issues of Life and Death! Thou orderest all Things by thy infinite Power and Wisdom, and hast appointed for all Men once to die; and, after this short Life is ended, hast, of thy infinite Goodness, provided for thy faithful Servants a State of endless Bliss and Happiness. O! make me truly sensible of the Frailty and Uncertainty of my Life; and teach me so to number my Days, that I may apply my Heart unto true Wisdom. Let not Death ever surprize me unawares, or find me in a State unprovided. But grant that I may live in such a constant Preparation for my latter End, that, how suddenly

suddenly soever thou shalt be pleased to take me out of this World, I may be found ready and prepared for that great Account, which I must one Day give before the Judgment-seat of Christ. Enable me, by the Assistance of thy Grace and holy Spirit, to finish the great Work of my Salvation before the Night comes, when no Man can work, and to lay a good Foundation of Hope and Comfort against the Hour of my Death ; that, when the Time of my Departure shall come, I may look back upon a well-spent Life with Joy and Comfort, and may meet Death without Fear.

Look upon me, O most gracious God, when the Time of my Dissolution draws nigh, as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus. Speak Peace unto my Conscience, and say unto my Soul, ‘ I am the God of thy Salvation.’ Let not the cruel Enemy of Souls affrighten me with his Terrours ; but give thy holy Angels charge over me, to keep me out of his Hands, and let the Comforts of thy Holy Spirit cheer and cherish my Soul in its Passage through this Vale of Tears and Misery, to a happy Eternity.

O Lord !

O Lord ! leave me not to myself in that Time of Distress, when I shall stand in so much need of thee. Confirm my Faith ; support me in my dying Agonies ; and forsake me not, when my Strength faileth. Let thy merciful Ears, O God, be then open to my Prayers ; and spare me, O Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, thou most worthy Judge eternal ! suffer me not at my last Hour, through any Pains of Body, or Weakness of Mind, to renounce my Dependence upon thee. But grant, O merciful Father, that, with an humble Reliance on thy Mercies, and the infinite Merits of my dear Redeemer, and with an entire Submission to thy blessed Will, I may chearfully resign my Soul into thy Hands, and may be willing, and even desirous, to leave this World, when thou, my God, in thy great Wisdom, shalt see it fitting.

O Lord ! let me never be separated from thee ; but grant that my Soul may be so united to thee, who art the Fulness of all Happiness, by the strongest Ties of Faith,

Faith, Love, and Obedience, that, after a Life spent here in thy Service, I may dwell with thee in Life everlasting, and be received into those Mansions of Eternal Bliss and Glory, which thou hast prepared for them that truly love and fear thee, Grant this, O Lord, through the Merits, and for the sake, of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, our only Saviour!

THE

THE
GREAT IMPORTANCE
OF A
RELIGIOUS LIFE.

CHAP. III.

HITHERTO I have considered the great Advantages of Religion, as they respect only our Well-being in this World, and our going comfortably out of it: but, there are other Advantages attending a good Life, infinitely beyond all that have been mentioned; namely, that it will entitle us, through the Merits of *Christ Jesus*, to an *Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*. I shall endeavour, therefore, to shew, in

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the last Place, that a serious and conscientious Observance of the Duties of Religion, will most certainly be rewarded with eternal Happiness in the Life to come.

And here I shall not presume so much as to aim at a Description of *that exceeding Weight of Glory*, which God has reserved for those that truly love him. In the Scripture, indeed, the Glories of the other World are represented to us, in Condescension to our weak Capacities, as a *Kingdom, and a Crown, an eternal Kingdom, and a never-fading Crown*; But the State of the other World is a State so unknown to us, and so much above our imperfect Conceptions, that we shall never be able fully to comprehend it, till we arrive at the actual Enjoyment. For, though we know that we shall there see God, and the Blessed Jesus, who *loved us and gave himself for us*, and shall to all Eternity enjoy *Him* who is the Source and Fountain of all Good; that we shall there converse with Saints and Angels, and for ever be singing Anthems of Praise to our great Creator and Redeemer;

yet

yet how great the Pleasure of this will be, and with what Extasies and Raptures our Souls shall then break forth, when they taste of the *Fulness of that Joy which is in the Presence of God for evermore*; is what our finite Understandings cannot possibly reach. Of this, however, we may rest assured; that the Things which God hath reserved for them that love him, are such *as neither Eye hath seen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive*. As this is sufficient for us at present to know in general, concerning this Fact; all curious Inquiries into the precise Nature of the Happiness of the next Life, will be of small Use to us: They may fill our Heads with fine Speculations, but will signify little to direct our Practice. What we are more concerned to know, and in the most explicit manner is, that our sincere Obedience to God's Commandments will certainly be rewarded with eternal Life and Happiness. This, indeed, is a Matter which it imports us to be well assured of; that we may not be weary of Well-doing, but *may run with Patience the Race that is set* Heb. xii.

Phil. iii. *before us, and press towards the Mark for*
14. *the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ*
Jesus.

There are some indeed (and a melancholy Reflection it is that there are) who would have us believe, that we die like the Beasts which perish, and that when we leave this World there is an End of our Existence. But these, upon Inquiry, I believe, will be always found to be Persons who first live as if there was no God, and then endeavour to persuade themselves and others, that there really is none: so that, instead of regulating their Practice by their Faith, they most preposterously suit their Faith to their Practice. I shall not, therefore, concern myself at present with these Men; my Design being chiefly for the Sake of those, who believe the Christian Religion, and the Revelation of God's Will in the Holy Scriptures. And surely to such it can be no Doubt, but that in those sacred Writings *we have eternal Life*; and that the Performance of God's Commandments, is the certain and indispensable Condition of obtaining it.

Natural Religion, it is true, will teach us, not only that *God is, but that he is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek him*: but it hath pleased God, of his great Goodness, not to leave us to the Light of Nature alone, to discover this weighty Truth. The Rewards of another Life are so fully and clearly revealed in the Writings of our Saviour and his Apostles; and the Way to obtain them is there so plainly marked out; that there is no Room for any Doubt, or Uncertainty concerning that Matter. Whatever dark, or imperfect, Notions the *Jews*, as well as *Gentiles*, had of a future State, it is certain, *that Life and Immortality is now brought to Light by the Gospel*: and we may rest assured, that though, when we die, our Bodies shall be laid in the cold Chambers of the Grave, and there become the Food of Worms, and moulder into Dust; yet it will not be long ere *this corruptible* Cor. xv. *shall put on Incorruption, and this mortal* 53. *shall put on Immortality. For, God hath* Acts xvii. *appointed a Day in the which he will judge* 31. *the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath*

E 3 given

given Assurance unto all Men, in that he hath
 2 Cor. v. raised him from the Dead: A Day wherein
 10. we must all appear before the Judgment-seat
 of Christ, that every one may receive the
 Things done in his Body, according to that he
 hath done, whether it be good or bad. And
 John v. then all that are in their Graves shall hear
 28, 29. his Voice, and shall come forth: they that have
 done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and
 they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection
 of Damnation.

He then who believes the Gospel (as every one must, that lives in the light of it, unless he be wretchedly blinded by his Lusts and Passions) can never doubt of these two great Articles of the Christian Religion; *the Resurrection of the Body, and the Life everlasting.* The Possibility of the former hath been made evident, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead; and the certainty of the latter appears, from the express Declarations of God in the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, the whole Tenour of the Christian Religion sufficiently proves it; every Precept of which tends to purify and refine our Natures, and to fit and prepare us
 for

for the Society of Saints and Angels in another Life. The *Apostle* assures us, that God hath not appointed us to *Wrath*, but to *Thef. v.* obtain Salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, 9, 10. who died for us, that we should live together with him. And St. John tells us, that God so loved the World, that he gave his only be- John iii. gotten Son, to the End that all that believe 16. in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.

If then we believe that God is infinitely just and true, we can never doubt, that at the great Day of Retribution, he will render to every Man according to his Deeds. To them Rom. ii. who, by patient Continuance in Well-doing, 6, 7, 8, 9; seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality; He (who is Truth itself, and cannot deceive) hath promised eternal Life: but to them who are contentious, and do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteousness; He hath declared that he will pour forth Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

Our Saviour, in his Exposition of the Parable of the Tares, tells us that at the Matt. xiii. End of the World, the Son of Man shall 40, 41, 42.

- send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom all Things that offend, and them which do Iniquity, and shall cast them into a Furnace of Fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. So likewise in his Exposition of the Parable of the Net, in the*
- Ver. 49. *same Chapter, he says, that at the End of the*
 50. *World, the Angels shall come forth and sever the Wicked from among the Just, and shall cast them into the Furnace of Fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of Teeth. Thus again,*
- Matt. xxv. *we are told by our Saviour, that when the*
 31, 32. *Son of Man shall come in his Glory, and all*
 33, 34. *the holy Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the Throne of his Glory, and before him shall be gathered all Nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his Sheep from the Goats; and he shall set the Sheep on his Right Hand, but the Goats on the Left. Then shall he say unto them on his Right-hand; Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared*
- Ver. 41. *for you from the Beginning of the World: but to them on the Left hand; Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. And these shall*

go away into everlasting Punishment, but the Ver. 46.
Righteous into Life eternal.

This, as it is a plain and lively Description of the awful Solemnity of that great and tremendous Day, *when the Son of Man* Matt. xvi.
shall come in the Glory of his Father, with ^{27.}
his Angels, to judge the Quick and the Dead; so it is sufficient to convince us, that, though *without Holiness no Man shall* Heb. xii.
see the Lord, yet that every one who be- ^{14.}
lieves the Gospel, and sincerely obeys the Precepts of it, shall assuredly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This was the very Purchase of Christ's Blood, and the End for which he was contented to be given up into the Hands of cruel Men, to be buffeted, spit upon, and evil-entreated, and at last to suffer a cruel and ignominious Death upon the Cross. *He gave himself for* Tit. ii. 14.
us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, Heb. 5, 9.
and become the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him. Though he was rich, 2Cor. viii.
yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. He Ifai. liii. 5.
was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities; the Chastisement of

our Peace was upon him, and with his Stripes we are healed.

The Redemption of Mankind was thought a Design worthy the Son of God. The Souls of Men were of so great a Value in His Sight, that he esteemed nothing too much, or too great, to suffer for their Sakes. He saw and pitied our Misery, and knew that without a Saviour we must be lost for ever: He therefore condescended so far as to humble himself even to the Death upon the Cross, for us miserable Sinners who lay in Darkness and the Shadow of Death; that he might make us the Children of God, and exalt us to everlasting Life. So that

Ephes. ii. *though we were sometimes afar off, yet being*
 13, 19. *now made nigh by the Blood of Christ, we are no more Strangers and Foreigners, but Fellow-citizens with the Saints, and of the Household of God.* And if we are careful

2Tim. iv. *to perform our Parts, we may assuredly say*
 8. *with St. Paul, that henceforth there is laid up for us a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give us at that Day.* For, we have the Promise of

Him

Him who is *Truth* itself and cannot deceive us, that, if we are *faithful unto Death*, He ^{Revel. ii.} will give us a *Crown of Life*. ^{10.}

And what a glorious Incitement is this to all Men, to live *soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World*! What can be more effectual to make us *stedfast and un-* ^{1 Cor. xv.} *moveable, always abounding in the Work of* ^{58.} *the Lord*, than to know that our *Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; that no good Action which we do, shall be lost and fruitless; on the contrary, that, in a little Time, all our Services will be infinitely rewarded; that every Grace and Virtue which we exercise in this Life, and every Degree of them, shall receive their just *Recompence at the Resurrection of the Just*; and that, if we obey God's Laws faithfully and sincerely, we may be assured, that, through the tender Mercies of our heavenly Father, and the Merits of our Redeemer, we shall be received into a Place of everlasting Rest and Peace; where we shall adore and praise the Author of our Salvation, and contemplate the glorious Perfections of his Majesty, with a joy and Satisfaction infinitely ex-

E. 6

ceeding

ceeding all that we can now possibly conceive?

‘ O blessed Time!’ (to use the Words of Archbishop Tillotson) ‘ when Mortality shall
 ‘ be swallowed up of Life! and Death and
 ‘ Sorrow shall be no more! when we shall
 ‘ be eased of all our Pains, and resolved of
 ‘ all our Doubts, and be purged from all
 ‘ our Sins, and be freed from all our Fears,
 ‘ and be happy beyond our Hopes! and
 ‘ have all this Happiness secured to us be-
 ‘ yond the Power of Time and Change!’

Col. i. 12. As these Considerations cannot but
 13. at present fill our Hearts *with Joy unspeakable*, and excite us continually to *give Thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; who hath delivered us from the Power of Darkness, and translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son*; So, when we come to have a nearer and more immediate View of the Glories of that Kingdom which God hath prepared for us; how will our Souls break forth into Extasies of Love and Joy! how will it transport us to see him, whom

we

we have loved and faithfully served! to see him, not arraigned for a Malefactor, not hanging in a shameful Manner upon the Cross! but to see him, in all his Majesty and Glory, sitting in a triumphant Manner upon his Throne, adored by Angels and Arch-angels, *thousand thousands* Dan. vii. *ministering unto him, and ten thousand times* 10. *ten thousand standing before him!* to see him, I say not as an angry and incensed Judge, but as a merciful Saviour and Redeemer, looking upon his faithful and beloved Servants with the tenderest Affection, and receiving them into the Arms of his everlasting Mercy, with those ravishing Words, *Come, ye Blessed of my Father, in-* Matt. xxv. *herit the Kingdom prepared for you from* 34. *the Foundation of the World!*

But then, on the other hand, with what Anguish and Despair will the Wicked and Ungodly behold the dreadful Solemnities of that awful Day! how will they tremble and be confounded, when the *Lord Jesus* 2 Thess. i. *shall be revealed from Heaven with his* 7. 8. *mighty Angels, in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? When*
they

2-Pet. i. i. they shall see the *Heavens passing away*
 10. *with a great Noise, and the Elements melt-*
ing with fervent Heat; the Earth also, and
the Works that are therein, burnt up!
 when they shall behold Hell open to
 receive them, and the great Judge of
 the World, with Terrour in his Looks,
 ready to pronounce that dreadful Sen-
 tence, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into ever-*
 41. *lasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his*
Angels!

Oh! in what Confusion and Agonies
 will those Souls be, to whom those dreadful
 Words shall then be spoken! How will
 they call upon the *Mountains and Rocks to*
 Rev. vi. *fall on them, and to hide them from the*
 16. *Face of him that sitteth on the Throne, and*
from the Wrath of the Lamb!—But, alas!
 what will that avail them, when the
 great Day of his *Wrath is come!* Whither
 shall they betake themselves, when both
 —xx. 11. *the Earth and the Heavens shall flee from*
the Presence of the Judge! If the Saviour
 of the World condemns them, who shall
 intercede in their Behalf? If He, that once
 died to purchase their Salvation, will not
 save them (as it is certain he will not save

the

the Wicked and Impenitent), to whom shall they fly for Succour! It will then be too late to cry for Mercy, when the Time of Judgment is come; too late to lament their Folly and Madness, when the Time of Working is over: all Prayers and Entreaties, all Tears and Repentance, will then be in vain. *He that is* Rev. xxii. *unjust must be unjust still; and he that is* ^{11.} *filthy must be filthy still. As the Tree is fallen, so it must lie for ever. The Time of Trial, the Day of Grace, is ended, and* Heb. x. *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin; but* ^{26, 27.} *a fiery Indignation must devour them. The dreadful Hour is come, when they must be banished for ever from the Enjoyment of Him, in whose Presence alone is Fullness of Joy; and be doomed to those Lakes of Fire and Brimstone, where the Worm dieth not, and the Fire is not quenched; where they must be bound in everlasting Chains, and be* *Day and Night for ever* Rev. xx. *and ever tormented by the Devil and his* ^{10.} *accursed Spirits (those cruel and unrelenting Beings) in the Flames of a most outrageous and never-to-be extinguished Fire.*

‘ Could

' Could I represent to you' (says Arch-
 bishop *Tillotson*, in one of his excellent
 Sermons) ' the Horrour of that dismal
 ' Prison, into which wicked and impure
 ' Souls are to be thrust, and the Misery
 ' they must there endure, without the
 ' least Spark of Comfort, or Glimmering
 ' of Hope ; how they wail and groan
 ' under the intolerable Wrath of God,
 ' the insolent Scorn and Cruelty of De-
 ' vils, the severe Lashes and Stings, the
 ' raging Anguish and horrible Despair of
 ' their own Minds, without Intermission,
 ' without Pity, and without Hope of
 ' ever seeing an End of that Misery,
 ' which yet is unsupportable for one Mo-
 ' ment.—Could I represent these Things
 ' to you according to the Terrour of them ;
 ' what Effect must they have upon us !
 ' with what Patience could any Man bear
 ' to think of plunging himself into this
 ' Misery ; and by his own wilful Fault and
 ' Follies endanger his coming into this
 ' Place and State of Torments !'

Oh ! who indeed, can think of these
 Things without resolving, in good earnest,
 to flee from the Wrath to come, and to
 secure

secure a happy Eternity, by a Life of Virtue and Righteousness ! who, that believes *the Wicked shall be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God* ; that considers what it is to dwell in the most exquisite Misery and Torments to all Eternity ; who, I say, that considers these Truths, will not immediately resolve *to have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness*, but give himself up entirely to the Service and Obedience of the blessed Jesus, with unfeigned Resolutions of *living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World* ! In a word, who that is truly wise, and considers that Time itself compared with Eternity, is short, and that the Time of Man is much shorter ; that Eternity has neither End nor Change ; and that every Man is hastening to an eternal and invariable State, and will soon be summoned to appear before the awful Tribunal of God ; there to give an Account of his Actions ; and, according as he has behaved himself in this Life, be then consigned to a Place of endless Happiness or Misery ; — who, I say, that reflects upon these great and important Truths, with that Seriousness
and

and Concern which they deserve, would ever resign his Integrity and part with that invaluable Prize, *a good Conscience*, for the greatest Happiness this World could promise him! How is it possible that a Man, who will give himself Time to consider what it is to be under the eternal Displeasure of Almighty God, should do any Thing wilfully and deliberately, which he knows will provoke his Anger! What wise Man would not rather submit to the worst that could befall him here in a *short* Life, than to run the least Risque of offending Him on whom his Welfare and Happiness must depend hereafter, as well as at present; not only in this Life, but through all Eternity: especially when he considers what Obligations he is under to approve himself a faithful Servant of his great Master, and to direct and govern his whole Conduct by the Will of his Creator; when he reflects upon the infinite Love of God manifested in all the Works of his Creation and Providence, but particularly in that stupendous Mystery of our Redemption; when he thinks *upon the Breadth and*
Length,

Length, the Height and Depth of that Love of God, which moved him to send his only-begotten Son into the World, to be the Propitiation for our Sins, and to suffer a cruel and ignominious Death upon the Cross, that we might not perish, but have everlasting Life! Oh! how is it possible that any Man with such impressions on his Mind, should not be filled with so grateful a Sense of what God has done for him, as to endeavour, all that in him lies, to act suitably to the infinite Love of so merciful a Father, so kind and loving a Saviour! —Surely the Love of God must constrain us—But, if there be any one so stupid and insensible, as not to be wrought upon by such powerful Motives, let him reflect upon the Terrours of the Lord, and ask himself seriously this important Question, Whether he is able to dwell with everlasting Burnings? Let him think upon that terrible Day of the Lord, which, whether he thinks of it or not, will most assuredly come, when all that are in their Graves ^{John v.} shall bear his Voice, and shall come forth; 28, 29. they that have done Good, unto the Resurrection of Life; and they that have done Evil, unto the Resurrection of Damnation; when.

Rev. vi.
15, 16.

when the Kings of the Earth, and the great Men, and the rich Men, shall hide themselves in the Dens and in the Rocks of the Mountains; and shall say to the Mountains and Rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the Face of Him that sitteth on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb. Let him revolve in his Thoughts the miserable Condition of those wretched Souls, that are now shut up in the Regions of everlasting Darkness, among an accursed Company of infernal Spirits; and then tell me, whether he thinks the short and momentary Pleasures of a wicked Life, will compensate for endless Misery and Torments.

There is no one, I believe, who thinks at all, but must think otherwise. But the great Misfortune is, that many Men are so inflamed by their Lusts and Passions, that they are seldom cool enough for sober Reflections. Yet, if they would be persuaded frequently to meditate upon Death and Judgment; if they would represent to their Minds what a vast Disproportion there is between Time and Eternity, and consider that the Pleasures of Sin, at best,

are

are but for a Season, whereas its Punishment is endless and intolerable; I say, could Men be brought to think of these Things with any Seriousness, I doubt not but such Thoughts would in Time have their proper Effect, and would so thoroughly convince them of the great Folly and Danger of Sin, as to make them in good Earnest set about the great Work of their Salvation.

‘ * The Judgment to come is a very
 ‘ amazing Consideration: it is a fearful
 ‘ Thing to hear of it; but it will be much
 ‘ more terrible to see it, especially to those
 ‘ whose Guilt must needs make them so
 ‘ heartily concerned in the dismal Consequences of it: and yet, as sure as I stand
 ‘ and you sit here, *this great and terrible*
 ‘ *Day of the Lord will come*; and *who may*
 ‘ *abide his coming*! What shall we do when
 ‘ that Day shall surprize us careless and
 ‘ unprepared! What unspeakable Horrour
 ‘ and Amazement will then take hold of
 ‘ us, when, *lifting up our Eyes to Heaven,*
 ‘ *we shall see the Son of Man coming in*
 ‘ *in the Clouds with Power and great Glory!* ”

* Abp. Tillotson's Sermons, Vol. II. p. 412.

‘ when

' when that powerful Voice, which shall
 ' pierce the Ears of the Dead, shall ring
 ' through the World, *Arise, ye Dead, and*
 ' *come to Judgment!* when the mighty
 ' Trumpet shall sound, and waken the
 ' Sleepers of a thousand Years, and sum-
 ' mon the dispersed Parts of the Bodies
 ' of all Men, that ever lived, to rally
 ' together and take their Places! and
 ' the Souls and Bodies of Men, which have
 ' been so long Strangers to one another,
 ' shall meet, and be united again, to re-
 ' ceive the Doom due to their Deeds!
 ' what Fear shall then surprize Sinners!
 ' and how will they tremble at the Pre-
 ' sence of the great Judge, and for the
 ' Glory of his Majesty! how will their
 ' Consciences fly in their Fates, and their
 ' own Hearts condemn them for their
 ' wicked and ungodly Lives, and even
 ' prevent that Sentence, which yet shall
 ' certainly be passed and executed upon
 ' them!'

Oh! let me then intreat every one, with
 all the Earnestness that an Object of such
 vast Importance requires, frequently and
 seriously to think upon the tremendous

Day of Judgment, and the great Account they must then give; to consider with themselves how they stand with respect to another Life; and what a dreadful Condition they will be in, if they should be called to appear at the *Judgment-seat of Christ*, before they have made their Peace with God, and secured an Interest in the Merits and Intercession of their great Judge. But especially let me persuade those, who, in Pursuit of their unlawful Pleasures have plunged themselves in Sensuality and Wickedness, to pause a Moment, and consider whither they are going. Let me beg of them as they have any Regard for their present Peace and Happiness, or any Value for their precious Souls; as they would not leave this World under the Terrours and Agonies of a guilty Conscience, nor appear at the last Day, in the Presence of God, and Angels, and of Men, under all the Circumstances of Horror, Shame, and Confusion; and, lastly, as they would not then be banished from the Presence of God for ever, and be cast into the bottomless Pit of Destruction, to
be

be there tormented without Measure, and without End; let me, I say, prevail upon them not to delay their Repentance one Moment, but immediately forsake their

Joel ii. 13. *evil Ways, and turn unto the Lord their God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to Anger, and of great Kindness; and who*
 Ezekiel xviii. 27. *has assured us, by his Prophet, that when the wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his Soul alive.*

As for those happy Christians who have entered upon a good Life, and are engaged in the Practice of Virtue and Religion; who make the Glory of God, and the Salvation of their own Souls, and the Souls of all others, their great Care and Concern; I need only to exhort them to go on in their Christian Course with Courage and Reso-

Heb. iv. *lution; to hold fast their Profession, and*
 14.
 Phil. iii. *with an unwearied Diligence to press to-*
 14. *wards the Mark, for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus; nothing*
 Phil. i. 6. *doubting, but that he that hath begun a good Work in them, will perform it until the Day of Jesus Christ. God is faithful,*

that

that has promised; and therefore they may rest assured, that he will remember and reward *their Work of Faith, and Labour of* Thes. i. *Love, and Patience of Hope in our Lord Jesus* 3. *Christ; and that in due Season they shall* Gal. vi. 9. *reap, if they faint not. Yet a little while,* Heb. x. *and he that shall come will come; and his* 37. *Reward is with him, to give to every Man* Rev. xxii. *according as his Work shall be: To him that* 12. *overcometh, he will grant to sit with him in* Rev. iii. *his Throne; even as he also overcame, and* 21 *is set down with his Father in his Throne.*

O happy, happy Time, for those blessed Souls who have fought the good Fight, and kept the Faith! All their Labours will then be at an End: that *Crown of Life*, which Rev. ii. God hath promised to his faithful Servants, 10. will then be bestowed upon them; and they shall be admitted to an *Inheritance in* 1 Pet. i. 4. *corruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.* They shall then be received into a Place of endless Bliss and Joy; where there Rev. xxi. shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor 4. Crying; neither shall there be any more Pain; but all Tears shall be wiped from their Eyes: and they shall for ever enjoy the most per-

fect and consummate Happiness, and sing eternal *Allelujahs of Praise and Thanksgiving unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.*

THE CONCLUSION.

IF a good Life be attended with so many Advantages as, I hope, I have shewn it is; if it will make us live happily, die comfortably, and at last intitle us, through the Merits of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, to an eternal Inheritance in that Kingdom which he has purchased for us with his most precious Blood: if, on the other hand, Guilt be its own Punishment in this World, and everlasting Misery will most certainly be the Lot and Portion of the Wicked and Impenitent in the next; *what Manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness!* and how steadfast and immoveable should these reflections make us in the Ways of God's Laws, and in the Works of his Commandments! With what

Indignation and Abhorrence should we look upon Sin ; and with what Speed should we flee from that dreadful Enemy of our Souls, which would rob us of our present, as well as future, Happiness ! How should the Consideration of these Things make us *take heed* Heb. iii. *lest there be in any of us an evil Heart of*^{12.} *Unbelief, in departing from the living God !* And how steadfastly should we resolve to have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkeness, but to walk as *Children of Light* in the Ways of true Piety and Holiness ; not delaying for one Moment the Care of our immortal Souls ! *For, the Day is far spent, the Night is at Hand,* and there is no Time to be lost. We have a great Work to do : a Work that requires and deserves our utmost Care and Diligence. If we perform it well, great will be our Reward in Heaven : for, *faithful is He that has promised.* We may be assured that if we are diligent and industrious in the Work which God hath assigned to us in this World, *our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord :* for, *if we have our Fruit unto Holiness, our End will be everlasting Life.* But if, instead of

Philip. ii. *working out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling*, that is, with the greatest Care and Circumspection, we are negligent and remiss in the Service of our great Lord and Master *Jesus Christ*; if, instead of *living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present World*, we lead vicious and wicked Lives, and spend our Days in Sin and Vanity; miserable will be our Condition both here and hereafter. For, although God is a Being of infinite Goodness and Mercy, and is patient and long-suffering toward Sinners; being *unwilling that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance*; yet we must remember, that he is also infinitely just, and will assuredly vindicate the Honour of his Laws. All Sin and Wickedness is an Abomination in his Sight: *He is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity*; and if his *Wrath be kindled, yea but a little*, what will become of the Wicked and Ungodly! Nothing but a sincere Repentance and Amendment of Life, will be sufficient to secure them from the Vengeance which he hath threatened to pour down upon all obstinate and rebellious Sinners: but true Repentance will most undoubtedly avert his An-

ger.

ger. He hath declared himself to be a God merciful and gracious, forgiving Iniquity, Transgression, and Sin; and hath promised pardon to all those who, with hearty Repentance and true Faith, turn unto him. *He hath no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked should turn from his Way and live.* In order to assure us of this his great Love to Mankind and of his Desire to reconcile us to himself, *He hath sent his Son, his only, his beloved Son, into the World, to the End that all that* John iii. *believe in him should not perish, but have* ^{16.} *everlasting Life.*

It hath pleased God, of his infinite Goodness, to establish a most gracious Covenant of Mercy to Mankind through the Mediation of his own Son: and the Condition on his Part of the Covenant, namely, the Remission of Sins, is always ready to be made good, if we fail not, on our Part, of sincere Repentance and a thorough Reformation of our Lives. Our Saviour hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World. He hath suffered a cruel and

ignominious Death upon the Cross for our Sakes; and by his Death and Sufferings hath purchased this Grace for us, that real Repentance, and the sincere Endeavour of perfect Obedience, shall be accepted, instead of Innocence: but without this Repentance, and renewed Endeavour of perfect Obedience, we shall not be accepted upon any Terms. The Sacrifice which Christ offered upon the Cross, although of infinite Value, will be of no Avail to us, unless, in Conformity with his Death and Resurrection, we die unto Sin, and rise again into Newness of Life. Nothing but a good Life will entitle us to the Favour and Love of God: and, without his Favour, *we are of all Creatures the most miserable.* Better had it been for us never to have been born, than to have made God our Enemy by leading vicious and wicked Lives. Let it then, above all Things, be our great and constant Endeavour to make Him our Friend, who is the best of Beings; the sovereign Good and Happiness of all his Creatures; and the Fountain and Foundation of all our Comforts and Enjoyments in this Life, and of all our Hopes and Expectations

pectations in that which is to come. Let us make Religion the great Business of our Lives; and, while we have Time and Opportunity, let us prepare ourselves, by a Life of Virtue and Righteousness, for that great Account which we must one Day give. Let not the Pleasures and Vanities of this World, which will shortly have an End, make us unmindful of the great and momentous Concerns of Eternity.—O Eternity! how amazing are the Thoughts of it! Who, that considers what it is to live for ever in a State of endless Happiness or Misery, would not labour and strive with all his Might, to secure the one and avoid the other! Now, this can only be secured or avoided by a good Life: for *without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord.* Prov. xiv, 27. Heaven is prepared for those only who fear God, and live in a strict Endeavour to perform a perfect Obedience to his Will. *There shall in no wise enter into that Holy Place any Thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh Abomination, or maketh a Lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's Book of Life:* and they are the Good and Virtuous only, who have kept themselves from the Pollutions of this

wicked World, and have led a Life of Piety and renewed Obedience toward God, and of Love and Charity toward their Neighbours. To all others, that blessed Lamb of God will declare *he knew them not*: to the *Workers of Iniquity*, even that merciful and compassionate Saviour will say, *Depart from me.*—Dreadful Words! Whither shall such wretched Souls go, when they are bidden to depart from the Saviour of the World!—Whither, indeed, but to that dismal Place of Horror and everlasting Misery *prepared for the Devil and his Angels!*

May God, of his infinite Mercy, give all of us Grace to see and follow the Things that belong to our everlasting Peace *in this our Day*, lest they be hidden from our Eyes, and all Opportunities of reconciling ourselves to our offended God be for ever lost!—

May every one of us be persuaded to hear—
 Ecclef. xii. *ken to the Advice of Solomon! Fear God*
 13, 14. *and keep his Commandments; for, this is the whole Duty of Man. For, God shall bring every Work into Judgment, and every secret Thing, whether it be Good, or whether it be Evil.*—And may we always keep in Remembrance

membrance that merciful Caution of our blessed Lord and Saviour ; *Watch therefore, Matt. xxv. for ye know neither the Day nor the Hour, 13. wherein the Son of Man cometh.*

A P R A Y E R.

O Most glorious Lord God, and mereiful Father in Christ Jesus, who hast prepared for them that love thee such good Things as pass Man's Understanding, and hast promised to give eternal Life to them who, by patient Continuance in Well-doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality ; Give me, I most humbly beseech thee, a firm and unshaken Faith in all thy Promises ; that, being fully persuaded of those important Truths which thou hast revealed to us in the Gospel, I may make it the principal Care and Concern of my whole Life to please and obey thee in all Things ! And, that I may obtain those Things which thou dost promise, make me

F. 5.

to

to love that which thou dost command ; and grant that, by the Assistance of thy Holy Spirit, I may be enabled to persevere in the practice of a holy Life, even to the last Moment of my Days !

Let the Hopes and Expectations of that unspeakable Happiness hereafter, which thou hast prepared for those who live in Obedience to thy Commandments, enable me to pass through this Vale of Tears and Misery, with Chearfulness and Submission to thy blessed Will, and to bear with Patience whatever Troubles thou, in thy great Wisdom, shalt see fit to lay upon me.

O Lord ! give me a Heart raised above the Vanities and Enticements of this World, and free from all its Pollutions and Defilements. Fix my Thoughts, my Hopes, and my Desires, upon Heaven and heavenly Things ; that, having alway in View that Crown of Glory which thou hast promised to thy faithful Servants, I may press toward the Mark for the Prize of the high Calling of God in Christ Jesus : and, being strengthened by thy Grace, and supported by thy Holy Spirit, I may run with Patience the Race which thou hast set before us ; that,
when

when the great Day of Retribution shall come, I may look up to my most merciful Judge with Joy and Comfort, and may hear those ravishing Words pronounced unto me, *Well done, thou good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Grant this, O merciful Father, through the alone Merits, and for the Sake, of my eternal Advocate and Mediator Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A MORNING-PRAYER for a FAMILY.

O MOST gracious God, and kind Father! in all Humility of Soul and Body, we present ourselves before the Throne of thy Majesty and Glory, acknowledging that we are thy dependent Creatures, and that from thy bountiful Hand we have received many and exceeding great Blessings.

By Thee, we were wonderfully made; by thy Power we have ever since been preserved; and it is owing to thy great Mercy and Goodness that we have not been cut off in the midst of our Sins, but that Thou hast been patient and long-suffering toward us, and hast given us this Opportunity of coming into thy Presence to renew our Praises and Acknowledgments to thy Divine Majesty. O Lord, thy Compassion fails not: By Thee we have been preserved the Night past; and

to

to thy Goodness we ascribe it, that we are brought in Health and Safety to the Beginning of this Day.

Accept, we humbly pray thee, of our unfeigned Thanks for all the Mercies and Blessings which thou hast been pleased to bestow upon us; and pardon, we beseech Thee, for the Sake of thy Son Christ Jesus, our great Unworthiness of what Thou hast done for us. Give us such a Sense of thy infinite Love and Kindness, as may engage us more and more to love and obey Thee, and make us afraid of every Thing that may be displeasing in thy Sight.

O Lord! vouchsafe us such a Measure of thy Grace and Holy Spirit, as may defend us against the Snares and Temptations of this wicked World, and enable us to overcome all our corrupt and sinful Desires. Give us a true Sense of the inestimable Value of our Souls, that we may make it the chief Concern of our Lives to work out our Salvation with the greatest Care and Diligence, and to secure an Interest in thy Favour, which is better than Life itself.

Withdraw our Minds from the Love of this World, and place them upon Heaven and heavenly Things. Give us Grace to use the Enjoyments which thou art pleased to bestow upon us, with Temperance, Sobriety, and Moderation; with an entire Trust and Dependence on thy fatherly Care and good Providence; and with a perfect Submission to thy blessed Will in all Things.

O Lord! root out of our Hearts all Pride and Envy; all Hatred, Malice, and Ill-will. Purify our Hearts from all Censoriousness and Uncharitableness, from all Lying and Slandering, and from whatever else is contrary to a truly Christian Spirit: and endue us, we most humbly pray Thee, with that Meekness and Humility which is in thy Sight of so great Value, and with all those holy and Christian Dispositions which thou lovest and delightest in.

Instruct us in all the Particulars of our Duty which we owe to Thee, our Neighbour, and ourselves. Guide us by thy Right-hand, and conduct us by thy good Spirit, through all the Business and Affairs of this Life. Teach us to act with Faithfulness.

fulness and Honesty in every Thing that we undertake; and give us such a Dread of thy Displeasure, and such a Sense of thy continual Presence with us, as may guard us, by thy Grace, against all the Temptations of the World, the Flesh and the Devil.

Be with us, O Lord, this Day, where-^{This is to}
 ever we go, and in whatsoever we do.^{be omitted}
 Preserve us from the Dangers of evil^{on a Sun-}
 Company; from the Deceitfulness of our^{day Morn-}
 own Hearts; and more especially from^{ing; and}
 those Sins, that are most apt to betray^{what fol-}
 and ensnare us. Let thy Blessing^{lows may}
^{be used in-}
^{stead there-}
^{of.}
 accompany all our honest Labours;
 and vouchsafe us such a Measure of
 Health, and other temporal Blessings, as
 thou seest best and most fitting for us. We
 desire, O Lord, to leave ourselves, and
 all our Concerns, in thy Hands; humbly
 beseeching Thee to take us, and all that
 belong to us, under the Protection of thy
 good Providence; and so to bless, direct,
 and guide us in this Life, that we may
 at last obtain that greatest of all Blessings,
 the eternal Salvation of our immortal
 Souls, through the Merits, and for the
 Sake,

Sake, of thy dear Son, and our alone Saviour Jesus Christ: for whom our Souls adore and praise thy glorious Name, and in whose most holy Words we sum up our own, and the Wants of all Mankind, saying, *Our Father, &c.*

This is to be used on a Sunday Morning, instead of the foregoing Paragraph.

Dispose our Hearts, O Lord, we humbly beseech thee, to a serious Attendance upon thee in all holy Duties. Make us duly mindful of all thy sacred Institutions, and grant that we may never so far forget the Interest of our Souls, as to neglect the religious Observance of the Christian Sabbath. And as thou hast brought us to the Beginning of this sacred Day; so be thou graciously pleased to take us into thy Protection, and to assist us in a right Discharge of its Duties. Withdraw our Minds from the Care and Business and Pleasure of this Life, which will shortly have an End, that we may more earnestly attend upon the great Concern of that far better Life, which is to last for ever. Give us awful Thoughts of thy great Majesty, and a lively Sense of our own Wants; that our Prayers and Praises and all our Services, may be offered

ferred up in such a serious and devout Manner, as may render them acceptable in thy Sight. Make us attentive to thy Holy Word, and to all the good Instructions that shall this Day be given us: and grant that we may not rest in mere outward Performances; but, by a right Use of thy holy Ordinances, may grow in Grace, and become every Day better Christians, and so improve in all virtuous and godly Living, that, when this short Life shall have an End, we may dwell with Thee in Life everlasting, through the Merits of thy Son, and our alone Saviour Jesus Christ: for whom our Souls bless and praise thee, and in whose most holy Words we sum up our own, and the Wants of all Mankind, saying, *Our Father, &c.*

An EVENING-PRAYER for a FAMILY.

O MOST merciful and gracious Lord God! the Creator, Preserver, and Governor, of the World! Thou art infinite in Mercy and Goodness to all that call upon thee faithfully, and hast promised, that when two or three are gathered together in thy Name, thou wilt be in the Midst of them. Look down, we humbly beseech thee, upon us thy unworthy Creatures who are here assembled before thee, acknowledging that thou art a God greatly to be feared for thy Power and Justice, greatly to be beloved for thy infinite Perfections and Goodness, and greatly to be praised for thy Bounty and merciful Kindness. But as for ourselves, we confess, O Lord, that we are vile and sinful Creatures; that we have, in many Things, acted contrary to thy most holy Will, and have neither loved thee, feared thee, nor obeyed thee,

thee, as we ought. O Lord! if thou should'st deal with us as we have deserved, we could expect nothing from thee but the Severities of thy just Wrath and Displeasure.

But, O gracious Father, who delightest not in the Death of a Sinner, look down upon us, we beseech thee, in thy Son Christ Jesus; and, for the Sake of his meritorious Death and Sufferings, pardon our many and great Transgressions of thy holy Laws; grant that we may amend whatever we have done amiss, and for the Time to come may be more careful to please thee, and more sincerely devoted to thy Service and Obedience.

Convince us, O Lord, of the great Folly and Danger of Sin, and make us so afraid of offending thee, that we may abstain from all Appearance of Evil, and do nothing but what is pleasing in thy Sight. Let the Interest of our immortal Souls be our chief Care and Concern; and grant that we may live as becomes the Servants of Christ, denying all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and living righteously, soberly, and godly, in this present World.

But,

But, as without thee we are not able to please thee, grant us the Assistance of thy Grace and Holy Spirit, that we may pass through all the Temptations of this World with Peace and Innocence and Safety; and enable us to bear up, with Courage and Perseverance, against all the Assaults of our great Adversary the Devil, who is daily lying in wait to destroy us.

Suffer us not, O merciful God, to be led away by the vain and foolish Customs of this World, nor seduced from our Duty by the Company and Example of the Wicked and Ungodly; but grant that we may make thy Laws the Rule of all our Actions, and faithfully discharge our Duty in the several Stations wherein thy Providence is pleased to place us.

Make us duly mindful that thou art present every where, and privy to our most secret Thoughts; that we may never dare to do any Thing but what thou approvest, and of which we may not fear to give an account at the great and terrible Day of the Lord Jesus. O fit and prepare us for that solemn Time by a virtuous and holy Life! that, when we shall

shall appear before the great Judge of all the World, we may be found in the Number of those happy Souls, whom he shall then pronounce blessed.

Extend thy Mercy, O God, to all Mankind, and bring them to the Light and Knowledge and Practice of thy Laws.

Remove, we humbly beseech thee, all Errors and Corruptions, all Divisions and Dissentions, from every Communion of Christians; and grant that the Lives of those who profess themselves the Disciples of Christ, may be holy and exemplary, and such as are conformable to the Gospel of our blessed Saviour.

Reform all Things that are amiss in these Kingdoms. Root out from among us all Irreligion and Profaneness, all Uncharitableness and Animosities. Pardon our great and crying Sins; avert the Evils that we have deserved; continue the Light of thy glorious Gospel among us; and give us all Grace to turn from the Evil of our Ways unto Thee the Lord our God!

Bless our Sovereign Lord the King, and all that are in authority under him both in Church and State. Make each of
them,

them, in their several Places and Stations, useful and serviceable to thy Glory, and the Good and Welfare of this Church and Nation.

And, O Thou, who art the Father of Mercies, and God of all Consolation, look down with Pity and Compassion, upon all thy afflicted Servants every where ; give them Courage, and Patience, Comfort and Support ; and, in thy good Time, a joyful Deliverance out of all their Troubles.

Send down thy Blessings Spiritual and Temporal upon all our Friends and Relations. Forgive those that have, at any Time, done or wished us Evil ; and vouchsafe to every one of us, and to all Christians, whatever thou knowest to be best for our temporal and eternal Welfare.

And now, O Lord, we desire with all Humility of Soul and Body, to adore thy incomprehensible Majesty, and to praise thy great and glorious Name, for all thy manifold Mercies vouchsafed to us and all Mankind ; but, above all, for thy astonishing Love in reconciling the
World

World unto thyself by the Death and Sufferings of thy dear Son.

We bless thee for our Creation and Preservation, for our Health, Strength, Peace, and Safety; for the Comforts and Conveniencies of this Life, and the Hopes and Expectations of a far better, through thy tender Mercies in Christ Jesus.

O Lord, imprint in our Hearts such a deep Sense of thy Mercies, that we may shew forth thy Praise not only with our Lips, but in our Lives, by giving up ourselves to thy Service, and by walking before thee in Holiness and Righteousness all the Days of our Lives.

We confess, O Lord, that we are unworthy of the least of all thy Favours; but, in Confidence of thy infinite Mercy and Goodness, we do in great Humility recommend ourselves, our Souls, and Bodies, and all that belong to us, to thy fatherly Care and good Providence; humbly beseeching thee, who art our only Safety and Defence, to take us this Night under thy Almighty Protection, and to give thy holy Angels Charge over us, that no Evil comes near to hurt us.

Refresh

An EVENING-PRAYER for a FAMILY.

Refresh our Bodies with quiet Rest and Sleep, and our Souls with the Comforts of thy Holy Spirit: and, when thou shalt think fit to remove us out of this World, give us everlasting Rest and Peace in thy eternal Kingdom, through the Merits, and for the Sake of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ, who hath taught us, when we pray, to say, *Our Father, &c.*

A MORN-

*A MORNING-PRAYER for a PERSON in
PRIVATE.*

O MOST great, most mighty, and most glorious Lord God ! look down from the Habitation of thy Holiness upon me thy unworthy Creature, who am come into thy Presence to adore thy incomprehensible Majesty, and to present before thee the Morning Sacrifice of my unfeigned Praises, for the many and undeserved Mercies thou hast bestowed upon me.

O Lord, I acknowledge, that to thee of Right belongs eternal Honour, Glory, Praise, and Adoration; for thou art the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, by whom all Things were made, and by whose infinite Power and Goodness they exist and are preserved.

Blessed be thy unspeakable Goodness, which hath advanced me to such a Degree of Being, that I am in some measure ca-

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pable

A MORNING-PRAYER

pable to know thee, to love thee, to serve thee, and to obey thee.

Blessed be thy Name, O Lord, that I was born of Christian Parents, and early dedicated to thee by Baptism; that by thy Grace and Goodness I have been preserved to this Moment; and that I have in any measure escaped the Pollutions of this wicked World.

I bless thee likewise, O Lord, for all thy temporal Mercies, and in particular for the Refreshments of the Night past; for protecting me from all evil Accidents; and for raising me up in Health and Safety to praise thy Goodness.

Pardon, O most gracious God, all my unworthy inattentions to the daily instances of thy exceeding Kindness and Mercy; and vouchsafe me such a Sense of thy infinite Love, as may inspire me with more vigorous and hearty Endeavours to serve thee for the Time to come.

O Lord, I acknowledge that I am a weak and frail Creature, and that without thy Help I am not able to bear up against the Trials and Temptations of this World. But since thou hast promised to give thy
Holy

Holy Spirit to them that ask it; I am emboldened to implore his divine Assistance to strengthen my Weakness, to help my Infirmities, and so to fortify my Mind, that I may not be tempted above what I am able to bear, nor seduced from my Duty to thee, by the deceitful Inticements of the World, the Flesh, or the Devil.

Root out of my Heart, O God, all Pride and Vain-glory; all Bitterness and uncharitableness; all Envy, Hatred, and Malice; and suffer me not to be led away by any of the foolish Customs and false Maxims of this World. And, O merciful Father, be thou pleased, of thy great Goodness, to endue me with that Wisdom which is from above, which is first pure, and then peaceable; with that Meekness and Humility, which is in thy Sight of so great Price; and with that truly Christian Temper and Disposition, which thou lovest and delightest in.

Lord, sanctify unto me all thy fatherly Dispensations, and let every Thing, Thou shalt think fit to send me, prove a Blessing and Advantage to my Soul. Give

me Grace to be entirely submissive and contented under all the Afflictions, Trials, and Disappointments, which thy Wisdom shall judge proper in order to bring me to thyself; and grant that by every Adversity that shall befall me, I may be weaned from this World, and more closely united unto thee.

Make me always mindful of my own Frailty; of the Shortness and Uncertainty of this Life; and of the Eternity of the next. Give me Grace so to live, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die. Let not Sicknes or Death ever surprize me unawares, or find me in a State unprepared; but grant that I may finish the great Work, which thou hast given me to do, before the Night cometh, when no man can work. O let me live in such a constant Preparation for my latter End, that how suddenly soever thou shalt be pleased to take me out of this World, I may be found ready for my great Account, through the Merits of my blessed Saviour and Redeemer Jesus Christ.

Be

Be with me, O Lord, this Day in all Places, and upon all Occasions. Direct and guide, sanctify and preserve me. Keep me both outwardly in my Body, and inwardly in my Soul. Let thy Blessing accompany all my honest Designs and Actions; and grant that I may

This is to be omitted on a Sunday Morning, and what follows may be used instead thereof.

undertake nothing but what is agreeable to thy blessed Will. Give unto me, and all that belong to me, such a Measure of Health, and other temporal Blessings, as thou seekest best and most fitting for us; but, above all things, give us thy Grace and Favour; that our Lives may be holy, our Deaths comfortable, and our eternal State happy and glorious with thee, through the Merits of thy Son and our alone Saviour, Jesus Christ the righteous; in whose most holy Words I sum up my own and the Wants of all Mankind, saying, *Our Father, &c.*

Accept, I beseech thee, O most gracious God, my hearty Desires to glorify thee in an especial manner on this Day, which thou hast peculiarly sanctified for thy Worship and Service.

Upon Sunday Morning, instead of the preceding Paragraph, this may be used.

I bless thy holy Name, O Lord, who by thy Almighty Power madest the Heavens and the Earth and all that therein is, and preservest and governeest all that thou hast made.

I bless thee, O Lord, who hath formed Man after thine own image, enduing him with Understanding, Reason, and Liberty; and made him capable of knowing, of loving, and of enjoying thee his Creator.

Above all, I bless and magnify thy holy Name, O Lord, heavenly Father, that thou hast given thine only Son, Jesus Christ, for the Redemption of Mankind; that he took our Nature upon him; that he died for our Sakes; that he is risen again from the Dead; that he ascended into Heaven, and that he there sitteth at thy right Hand, to make intercession for us; that he hath made known to us the Way to eternal Life, enlightening us by his Word for our Direction, and his Holy Spirit for our Assistance.

Blessed be thy Holy Name, that thou hast appointed this Day, not only for a Rest from our ordinary Labours and Employments, but chiefly for a perpetual
Comme.

Commemoration of these thy Favours, and for giving us stated Opportunities for thy Worship and Service, and for the Care of our immortal Souls.

My Soul desires to bless thee, that thou hast made me a Partaker of all these inestimable Advantages.

O Lord, prepare my Heart for attending upon thee in thy House, and afford me thy gracious Assistance in all the Parts of thy Service.

Let thy Word make deep and lasting Impressions upon me. Help me diligently to improve all Opportunities that shall be afforded me this Day, whether public or private, to the Glory of thy great Name, and the Benefit and Consolation of my Soul, through Jesus Christ my Saviour. *Amen.*

*An EVENING-PRAYER for a PERSON in
PRIVATE.*

MOST great and mighty God ! Thou art the Sovereign Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator, the Preserver, and Governor of all things : thou dwellest in that Light, which no mortal Eye can approach ; and yet disdainest not to behold the Children of Men. Look down, I beseech thee, upon me thy unworthy Creature, who am come into thy Presence, adoring thy Majesty, and acknowledging that my Dependence is wholly upon thee, who art the Author of my Being, and the Foundation of all my Hopes, both here and hereafter.

O Lord, I confess that I am a weak and frail Creature ; my Nature is corrupt, and miserably prone to offend thee. I find a Law in my Members warring against the Law in my Mind, which I confess with Sorrow, hath too often prevailed against me.

me. The Pleasures and Profits of this World are too apt to engage my Affections, and to make me cold and remiss in the great and important Work of my Salvation. I have been guilty of manifold Neglects and Omissions of my Duty towards thee, and have not served thee with that Purity of Intention, with that Sincerity of Heart, with that Fervency of Spirit, with that Zeal for thy Glory, with that Care, and Diligence, and Constancy, that I ought.

O Lord, if thou shouldest be extreme to mark what is done amiss; if thou shouldest call me to a strict Account for my Life past; how should I be able to stand in thy Sight! If thou shouldest deal with me as I have deserved, I could expect nothing but the Severities of thy Wrath and Displeasure: But, O gracious Father, thou hast revealed thyself to the Sons of Men, as a God merciful and gracious, forgiving the Transgressions and Iniquities of the repentant Sinner: remember then, I beseech thee, thy tender Mercies, which have been ever of old, and for the Sake and

Merits of my blessed Saviour, forgive, I humbly pray thee, all the Sins and Vanities, the Follies and Indiscretions of my Life past. O! reserve not my Sins to be punished in the Day of thy Wrath and Displeasure, but blot them out of thy Remembrance, that they may never rise up to my Confusion here, nor to my Condemnation hereafter.

O! enable me, by the Assistance of thy Grace, to reform whatever thou seest amiss in the Temper and Disposition of my Mind, or in any of the Actions of my Life; that I may love thee more, and serve thee better, and do thy Will with greater Care and Diligence, than I have yet done.

O Lord! keep up in my Mind a lively Sense of my Duty towards thee, and of that great Account, which I must one Day give. Suffer me not, I beseech thee, to fall into a careless and unthinking State, nor to be unmindful of that one Thing needful; the Salvation of my immortal Soul. Make me so sensible of those dreadful Threatnings, which thou hast denounced against Sinners, that whatever else I leave undone, I may make it my chief Care and Concern to secure.

cure an Interest in thy Favour. And, O merciful Father, be thou pleased, of thy great Goodness, so to assist my weak and feeble Endeavours, that I may not be unsuccessful in a Matter of such vast Concern.

Root out of my Heart, O God, by the powerful Efficacy of thy Grace, all sinful and corrupt Affections. Wean me from the Vanities and Pleasures of this World; and give me a full Conviction of the Uncertainty and Insufficiency of all Things here below. O! let me never seek for Happiness in the Enjoyments of this Life; but grant that I may daily aspire after that eternal and unchangeable State of felicity hereafter, which thou hast reserved for thy faithful Servants: to which, I beseech thee, of thy infinite Love and Mercy, to bring me, through the Merits, and for the Sake, of thy dear Son, *Jesus Christ*, our Lord.

Extend thy Mercy, O God, to all Mankind: In a more particular Manner, I pray thee to be gracious to these sinful Nations to which I belong; to pardon our great and

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crying Sins; to avert the Judgments which we have most justly deserved; and to put away from us the Spirit of Profaneness and Infidelity, of Malice and Uncharitableness; that thou mayest delight to dwell amongst us, and be our God, and we thy People.

Bless and preserve our Sovereign Lord King *GEORGE*, and grant that all who are in Authority under him may faithfully endeavour to promote thy glory, and the Good and Welfare of this Church and Nation.

Look with Pity and Compassion upon all thy afflicted Servants: be a Father to the Fatherless; heal the Sick; supply the Wants of the Poor and Needy; and grant that whatsoever is wanting of outward Comforts to any one, may be abundantly made up by the inward Consolations of thy Holy Spirit.

Bless all my Friends and Relations, especially —; reward all who have done me Good; forgive all who have done or wished me Evil; and vouchsafe to every one of us, from the highest to the lowest, what—

whatever in thy great Wisdom thou knowest to be needful both for our Souls and Bodies.

And now, O most merciful Father, from an humble Sense of thy great Goodness, I adore and praise thy glorious Name, for all the Manifestations of thy Love and Kindness vouchsafed unto me. I bless thee for my Being; for my Reason, and all the Endowments and Faculties of my Soul and Body; for my Health, Friends, Food and Raiment; and all the other Comforts and Conveniencies I enjoy; for thy continual Care and watchful Providence over me, through the whole Course of my Life; and, particularly, for the Preservation and Protection of me the Day past.

Give me Grace, I beseech thee, to make a right Improvement of all thy Blessings; and be thou graciously pleased to take me, and all that belong to me, this Night under the Care and Protection of thy Fatherly Providence. Give thy holy Angels Charge over us; and grant us such Refreshment of Soul and Body as may enable us chearfully to go through the Duties of that Station wherein

wherein thou hast placed us. And when thou shalt be pleased to remove us out of this World, O! let us be found in the Number of thy faithful Servants, through the Merits of our Blessed Saviour and Redeemer, *Jesus Christ*: for whom my Soul doth bless and praise thee, and in whose most holy Words I sum up all our Wants, saying,
Our Father, &c.

A PRAYER

*A PRAYER, which may be added to the
daily EVENING-PRAYER, on the
LORD'S DAY.*

I Again return my most humble and hearty Thanks to thee, O Lord my God, for the special blessings of this thy sacred Day; that I have been admitted to the great Privilege of joining with thy faithful People, in their Assemblies for public Worship; and to offer up my Praises and Prayers to thy divine Majesty, in the Name of our blessed Redeemer; to hear thy holy Word read and preached by the Ministers of thy Gospel; and that I have had farther Opportunities for employing myself more privately in thy Worship and the Care of my immortal soul.

I earnestly beseech thee, O Lord, to pardon all the Wanderings and Disorders of my Mind, and whatsoever else thou hast seen amiss in my Attendance upon thee: and graciously to accept my sincere

cere, though weak, Endeavours to serve thee.

Cause thy Word, which I have heard or read, to be imprest upon my Heart, and to bring forth the Fruits of a holy and religious Life.

Help me, by the use of all thy appointed Means of Grace and Salvation, to grow in Grace, and in the Knowledge of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; fitting me more and more for seeing and enjoying thee my God, and my blessed Redeemer, in the Life to come: and grant, that when I shall cease to praise and serve thee with thy Saints on Earth, I may continue to be so employed with the blessed Spirits in Heaven.

I heartily beg the same blessings for all my Fellow Christians, recommending them and myself to thee, my heavenly Father, in the Words, and through the Intercession of Jesus Christ thy Son, our only Mediator and Advocate.

Our Father, &c.

A MORN-

A MORNING-PRAYER for a young
PERSON.

O Lord, my heavenly Father, I humbly adore thee, as the Maker and Governour of the World, the Authour of my Being, the Preserver of my Life, and the Giver of every good Thing.

I heartily thank thee for the comfortable Rest which I have enjoyed the Night past; that thou hast preserved me in Safety, and raised me up in Health.

I bless thee for all thy Mercies to me, ever since I came into the World, and especially for those Advantages thou hast given me, of being Instructed and Improved in the Knowledge of thee, the only true God, and of Jesus Christ my Lord.

Grant, O Good God! that the Sense of thy Favours may so deeply affect my Heart, that I may shew forth my Thankfulness, in the whole Course of my Life.

I am

I am thine, O Lord, by Creation, by Redemption, by my Baptism and Christian Profession, by all the Obligations which thou hast laid upon me: I desire to be thine also, by a willing Dedication of myself to thee every Day of my Life, and by a constant and faithful Endeavour to approve myself to thee.

I beseech thee, in thy great Mercy, through the Mediation of my blessed Redeemer, to pardon all my past Offences, and to enable me, by thy Grace, to discern and to amend whatsoever is amiss in me.

Help me ever to remember the Christian Principles which I have learned, and the pious Instructions which have been given me; and never to depart from the good Way in which I have been taught to walk.

Incline my Heart to all that is good: grant that I may be modest and humble in my Carriage and Behaviour; chaste and pure in all my Thoughts, Words, and Actions; true and just in all my Dealings; respectful and obedient to my Superiours; innocent and inoffensive in my whole Conversation; faithful and diligent in the Discharge of all the Duties of that State and
Con-

Condition of Life, wherein thou hast placed me: and teach me to fear and love thee, my God, above all Things; and to do to all others, as I would they should do unto me.

Make me perfectly contented with my Condition, and thankful to thee, who hast given me all Things necessary for Life and Godliness. Let thy good Providence always take Care of me, and let me never place my Trust and Confidence in any Thing but in thee.

Take me, I beseech thee, into thy Protection this Day; keep me, if it be thy good Will, in Health and Safety. Preserve me from the Vanity of my own Heart, and from the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil. Help me (through a Sense of thy constant Presence with me, and of the Account I am to give unto thee) so to govern all my Thoughts, Words, and Actions, that I may reflect upon them with Satisfaction at the Close of this Day.

Let thy Blessing be upon every Member of this Family: Upon all my Relations and Friends; upon all, whom I ought and whom I desire to pray for.

I hum.

An EVENING-PRAYER

I humbly commit both myself and them to thee, O my God, in the Name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, and in the Words which he himself has taught me.

Our Father, &c.

An EVENING-PRAYER *for a* YOUNG PERSON.

MOST gracious God, my heavenly Father, as I began, so I desire always to end the Day, with blessing thy Holy Name, and imploring thy Favour.

Honour and Worship, Praise and Thanksgiving, are due to thee from every understanding and reasonable Creature. I heartily bless thee, that I am in that Number whom thou hast made to serve and love thee, and that thou hast moreover revealed thyself to me, by thy Son Jesus Christ my Redeemer, and encouraged me to call upon thee in his Name.

I humbly thank thee for thy daily Care of me, and particularly for that good Providence

vidence which hath been over me the Day past; that thou hast preserved me from the many Evils to which I am justly liable; and hast bestowed upon me so many good Things which I have not deserved; especially, for whatsoever thou hast enabled me to do, which is acceptable in thy Sight, and which I can reflect upon with Satisfaction.

I humbly bewail, O Lord, the great Weakness and Corruption of my Nature, and the many Errours and Transgressions of my Life. I humbly beg thy Mercy in the Pardon of all my Sins, through the Mediation of my blessed Redeemer; particularly of whatsoever thou hast seen amiss in me this Day, either in my Thoughts, Words, or Actions.

Grant, O Lord, that the Sense of my Unworthiness may always keep me humble, and work in me an unfeigned Repentance of all my Sins; and let the Remembrance of them ever excite me to a greater Care and Watchfulness for the Time to come. Strengthen in me every good Purpose and Resolution. Whatsoever Part of my Duty I know not, do thou teach me; and wherein I have done amiss, help me to do so no more.

Leave

Leave me not, O Lord, at any Time to myself, nor in the Hands of my spiritual Enemies. Preserve me from those Circumstances, that would prove a Snare or Temptation to me. Let thy good Spirit, continually enlighten and sanctify my Mind; directing and assisting me through the whole Course of my Life.

Fill me with a Sense of my constant and entire Dependence upon thee, that I may always commit myself to thy Care, and be ever satisfied with thy Disposal of me.

Teach me so to number my Days, that I may apply my Heart to true and heavenly Wisdom. Help me to live in a daily Preparation for my great Change, keeping my Conscience void of Offence, both towards Thee, and towards Men: and grant that I may be always so employed, as I shall wish I had been when I come to die; that whensoever thou shalt think fit to call me out of this World, I may readily and thankfully exchange it for a better.

Take me, I beseech thee, into thy gracious Protection this Night. Preserve me, if it be thy good Will, in Health and
2
Safety,

Safety; and grant me that Rest which may refresh my Body, and dispose me to serve thee chearfully, both in Body and Mind, the ensuing Day.

I heartily desire the Good of all Mankind, and pray unto thee for the Purity, the Peace, and the Enlargement, of thy holy Church; for thy Direction and Assistance of all its Governours and Pastors, particularly those under whose Guidance I am placed; for the Welfare of my Country; for a Blessing upon the King, and all in Authority under him; for the Relief and Comfort of all that are in Affliction; for all my Friends and Relations; beseeching thee to hear and to accept me, and all that call upon thee, in the Name of Jesus Christ, our only Lord and Saviour, who hath taught me thus to pray:

Our Father, &c.

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